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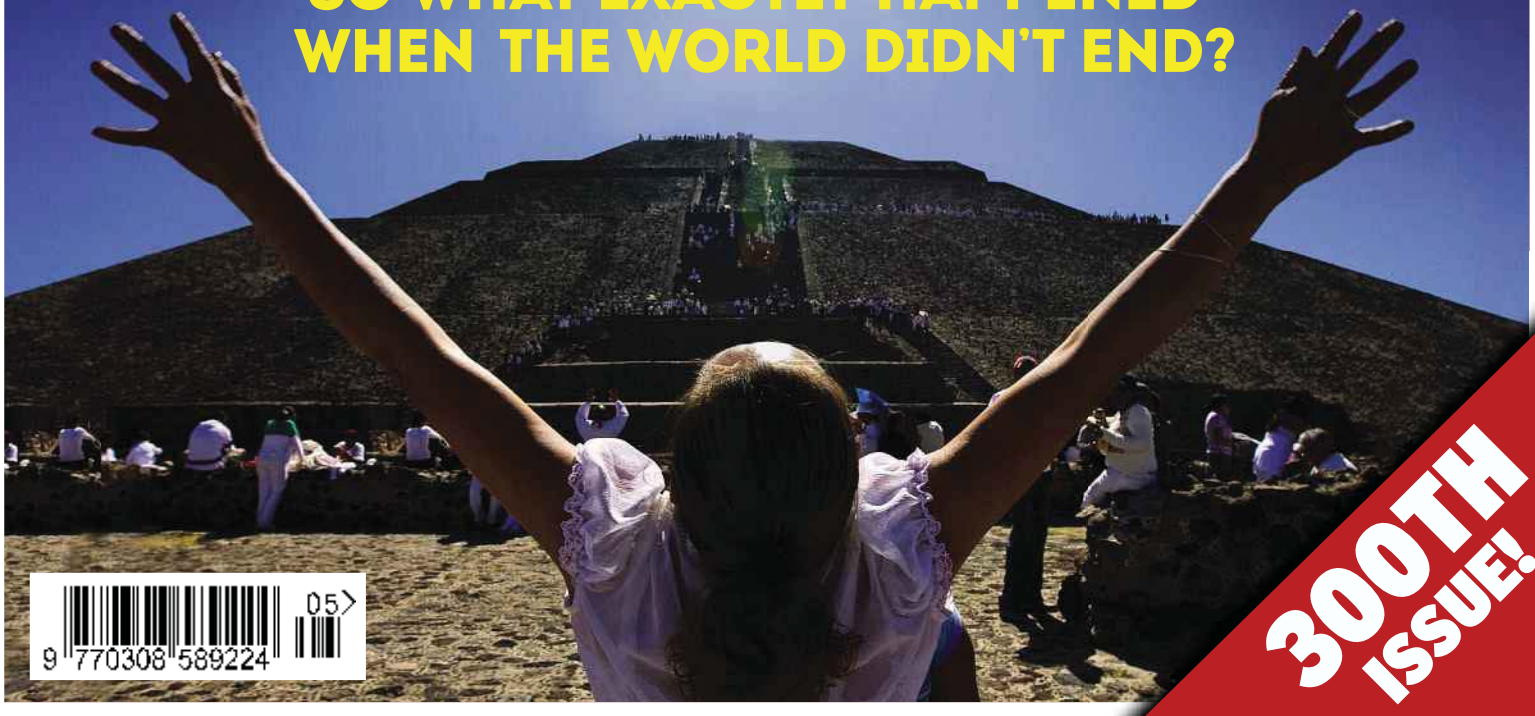

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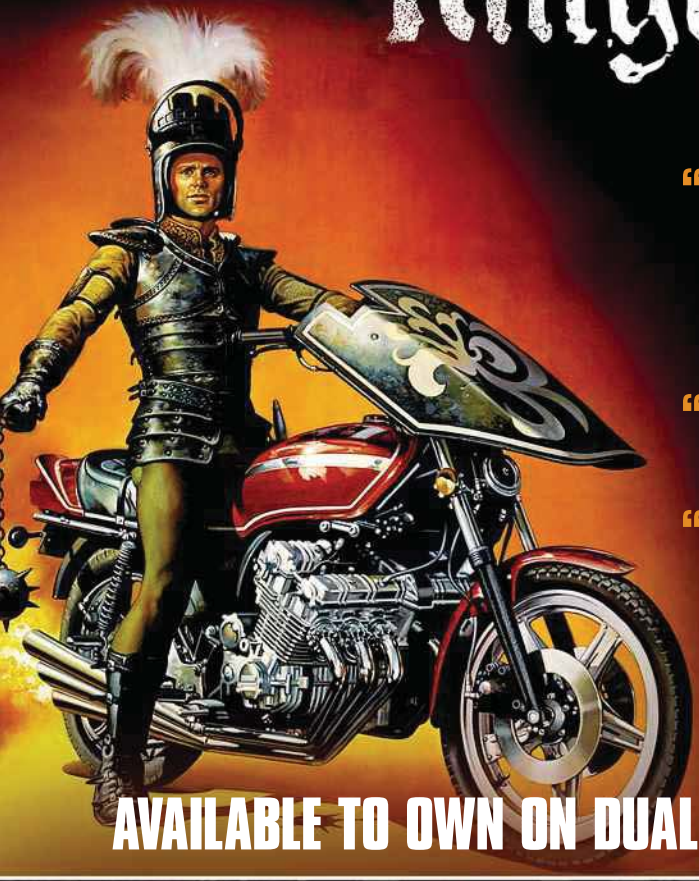

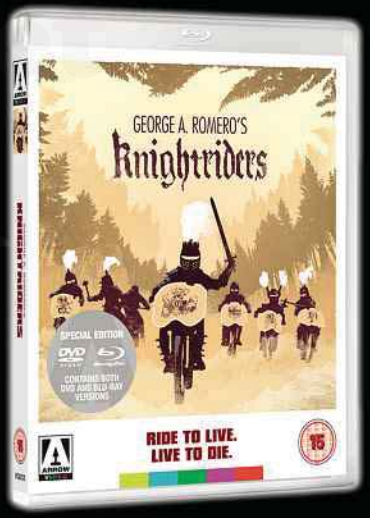

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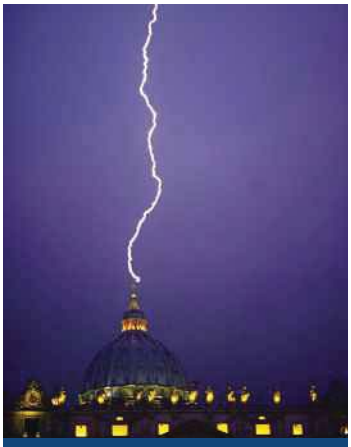

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strange days

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JAN BONDESON celebrates the career of Carlo the acting Newfoundland dog and other celebrated canine thespians of the Victorian stage.

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Eric John Dingwall, author, anthropologist, librarian and psychic investigator, was also known by some as the 'British Kinsey' due to his interest in sex. It was an interest, though, that brought him into conflict with his fellow psychical researchers, says Christopher Josiffe.

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editorial

Apocalypse Not!

Having let the dust settle, we thought it would be appropriate for our special 300th issue to revisit another date: the much heralded Maya Apocalypse promised for 21 December last year. As expected, nothing much happened – no pole shift and attendant planetary cataclysm and no shift in human consciousness announcing the dawning of a New Age (at least as far as we can tell).

For the mainstream media – which had spent the previous year filing newspaper pages and TV schedules with breathless apocalyptica, the story was over by 22 December, consigned to the dustbin of history along with a hundred other fads and fancies of an ephemeral age. But what about the New Age prophets of doom themselves, or their legions of crystal-clutching followers? Have they simply scuttled away hoping everyone would forget their pronouncements? Have they apologised for their inaccurate predictions of disaster? Or are they busy setting the next date for the End of the World? In our mini-sypmosium on the apocalypse that wasn't, David V Barrett suggests some 'coping strategies' for failed prophets; Kevin Whitesides examines what they are up to now; Peter Brookesmith peels back the cheerful façade of New Age belief to reveal its darkly irrational nature; and Richard Stanley, our man in Bugarach, reveals what it was like to spend the last days in the French village at the End of the World – a tale that would make perfect material for a latter-day Ealing comedy.

"RELIEVED? I WAS BANKING ON NOT HAVING TO CLEAR UP"

FORTEAN FUNNIES

Speaking of comedy, another contributor to this issue pops up in a somewhat unfamiliar guise this April. Dr Jan Bondeson – better known as a senior lecturer and consultant rheumatologist at Cardiff University, author of a number of fortean books and an *FT* regular – is venturing into the world of live comedy. At London's Conway Hall on 6 April, Jan will be on stage with host Dan Schreiber, co-creator of BBC Radio 4's *The Museum of Curiosity*, and Marc Abrahams, editor of the *Annals of Improbable Research* and master of ceremonies for the Ig Nobel Prizes. We are promised "a live comedy evening featuring an 18th century bottom-stabbing villain, a bra that doubles as a gas mask, a woman who laid an egg, a proven cure for hiccups (three words: digital rectal massage), and much more..." If you'd like to see Jan strutting his funny stuff, further details are available at: www.conwayhall.org.uk/101-people-to-meet-before-you-or-they-die

GREETINGS, POPE PICKERS...

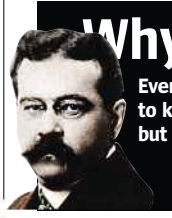
As we send this issue to press, the conclave of Cardinals of the RC Church has chosen a new Pope – 76-year-old Argentine Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio has been elected and has taken the name Francis. While this time around it took just a day and a half and five ballots before white smoke billowed from the rickety-looking Vatican chimney, we'd nevertheless like to point out that there *is* a quicker way. On 4 November last year, a blindfolded boy chose the 118th Pope of the Coptic Orthodox Church by pulling his name out of a glass chalice. Bishop Tawadros, 59, became Tawadros III after Bishoy Gerges picked him from a shortlist of three in Cairo. *FT* wishes both Popes the best of fortean luck in their new jobs.

ERRATUM

FT299:24: Reader Toby Longworth wrote in to point out a 'slip of the pen' in David Clarke and Andy Roberts's Flying Saucery column entry 'The Bootleg Files', in which the actor who played abductee Barney Hill in the TV movie The UFO Incident was identified as "James Earl Ray". As Toby writes: "If this indeed was the case, I would agree with you that this film was 'well worth examining and pondering as a piece of social history', as James Earl Ray was the demented white supremicist who shot Martin Luther King. Is it possible you meant James Earl Jones? If so, however, this is not the first time this confusion has arisen. In fact, when the motel where MLK was shot was turned into a museum, a plaque was erected to thank a certain African American actor for his support for the project and his lasting contribution to American race relations. It was up for quite some time until someone noticed that the plaque thanked James Earl Ray, not James Earl Jones. A much more serious slip of the pen in that context, I'm sure you agree..."

MARTIN ROSS

DAVID SUTTON
BOB RICKARD
PAUL SIEVEKING


Why fortean?
Everything you always wanted to know about *Fortean Times* but were too paranoid to ask!
SEE PAGE 78

Write Your Way To A New Career!

Writers Bureau Celebrates Twenty-four Years of Helping New Writers

by Nick Daws

Hazel McHaffie

Tim Skelton

When distance-learning pioneer Ernest Metcalfe founded The Writers Bureau in the late 1980s, he can hardly have dared hope that twenty-four years on it would be acknowledged as Britain's leading writing school. Yet so it proved, with thousands of Writers Bureau students seeing their work in print for the first time. And, for many of those who persevered with their writing, the dream of becoming a successful writer has turned into reality.

Students such as Tim Skelton. An engineer by profession, he had always harboured an ambition to write, and at the age of 40 signed up with The Writers Bureau. The decision changed his life: "My writing career took off exponentially. I started appearing regularly in lifestyle and in-flight magazines. The following year I was commissioned by Bradt Travel Guides to write a guidebook to Luxembourg.

"My writing career took off exponentially."

I've appeared in The Times and The Independent, and updated guidebooks for Fodor's, Thomas Cook, and the AA."

Another student who benefited was Hazel McHaffie. Hazel wanted to make her academic work in Medical Ethics more accessible to people, and decided to write the themes into novels. Following her Writers Bureau course, Hazel has had five novels published, and appeared at the Edinburgh International Book Festival. She also has her own website at www.hazelmchaffie.com.

Sometimes studying with The Writers Bureau takes students down new and unexpected paths. Patricia Holness originally enrolled on The Writers Bureau's Writing for Children course. However, she soon realised that what she was learning applied to other types of writing as well.

She is now a full-time writer, regularly selling short stories for both children and adults. She also has a monthly column in Devon Life.

These are just a selection from the inspirational true stories from students of The Writers Bureau. There's no reason why YOU couldn't be their next success story. With a 15-day free trial and money-back guarantee, there is nothing to lose and potentially a whole new career to gain! So why not visit their website at www.writersbureau.com or call on Freephone 0800 856 2008 for more information?

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Cindy-Lou Dale, Kent
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strangedays

Burying the bearded lady

Julia Pastrana's body is finally laid to rest in Mexico after more than 150 years on the road

Julia Pastrana was probably the most famous "bearded lady" ever known (see **FT108:30**); she was also billed as "the world's ugliest woman". She had a face covered with thick hair, thick lips, a broad flat nose and large ears; she probably suffered from extreme congenital hypertrichosis and severe gingival hyperplasia.

She was a Mexican Indian, born around 1834, and worked as a servant for the family of Pedro Sanchez, Governor of the state of Sinaloa. People called her the "bear woman" or "ape woman". In 1854 she met Theodore Lent, an American showman, who took her to New York, where she was exhibited as a "semi-human being" and created a sensation. Three years later she was world-famous and Lent took her to London as "The Nondescript". She read avidly, sang and danced and spoke English. She married her impresario, who exhibited her in a dozen countries.

She fell pregnant in Moscow, but the baby was hirsute and deformed like her, and died after 35 hours. Julia herself died five days later, in March 1860. Lent had both mother and child embalmed and continued to exhibit the corpses round Europe. He later married another "bearded lady" from Germany, whom he also put on public display, and claimed that the women were sisters. The abominable showman died in a Russian insane asylum sometime before 1888.

The embalmed mother and son changed hands repeatedly and continued to be exhibited, and in 1921 were bought by Norwegian fairground owner Håkon Lund. As far as the scientific world was concerned, they had disappeared.

LEFT: Julia Pastrana, and the service at Sinaloa de Leyva.

In 1969 they came to the attention of curiosity collectors, and in 1972 were rented by an American travelling amusement park called Million Dollar Midways, which took them on tour across the US. Back in Norway in 1976, someone broke into the Oslo fairground where the mummies were kept in storage and damaged the baby's body (which was subsequently eaten by mice). There was another break-in in 1979, and Pastrana's body went missing. Police found it in an abandoned caravan and stored it in a basement at Oslo's Institute of Forensic Medicine.

Mexican artist Laura Anderson Barbata began a campaign for Pastrana's mummy to be returned home in 2005, with Mexican officials subsequently lending their weight to her request. "I felt she deserved the right to regain her dignity and her place in history, and in the world's memory," she said.

Pastrana was returned to Mexico earlier this year. People flocked to the town of Sinaloa de Leyva on 13 February where she was laid to rest in a white coffin adorned with white roses as a band played traditional music. "Imagine the aggression and cruelty of humankind she had to face, and how she overcame it. It's a very dignified story," said Sinaloa Governor Mario Lopez. "A human being should not be the object of anyone," Father Jaime Reyes Retana told mourners.

See *A Cabinet of Medical Curiosities* (1997) by Jan Bondeson, pp.216-244; *[AP] BBC News, 13 Feb; Times, 14 Feb 2013.*

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AN AVATAR ON TRIAL
Russian cult leader faces 11-years in high-security jail
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SHELLEY'S SHOCKER
Jump-starting the dead, from Paracelsus to Frankenweenie
PAGE 16

THE DEVIL INSIDE HIM
Could Jimmy Savile have been a Satanic Ritual Abuser?
PAGE 21

SHC in the USA

Oklahoma man's death baffles local authorities

In September 2011, a coroner in West Galway, Ireland, declared that the death of Michael Faherty, 76, was a case of SHC (spontaneous human combustion), supposedly the first time a coroner had admitted to such a possibility **(FT281:14-15)**. Readers unfamiliar with the arguments pro and con SHC should refer back to our report. Now here's a possible example from the US.

At about 11am on 18 February, the body of Danny Vanzandt, 65, was found in the kitchen of his house on Bawkin Road outside Muldrow, Oklahoma. The discovery was made by Vanzandt's brother Aaron and his stepson. Family members said they noticed the back window of the man's pickup truck was busted out (which probably had no bearing on the case). Following the state medical examiner's findings the next day, the Sequoyah County Sheriff's Office ruled out homicide, but not SHC. "The body is burned, incinerated, like I've never seen before and it's some kind of chemical reaction or something the way I can see it," said Sheriff Ron Lockhart, who spent about 20 years as an arson investigator for the Fort Worth, Arkansas, Police Department. He added that the fire didn't damage the house and there were no signs

of break-in or a struggle, and no sign of any accelerant. "There was no damage to the furniture or anything around the fire, so it was a low heat fire," he said, observing that the body appeared to have burned for up to 10 hours. "You're thinking someone poured something on him, but there was no fire source. It's very unusual, it's bizarre, and I can't explain it."

The deceased was said to be an alcoholic and avid smoker who also had "poor hygiene" and no running water in his house at the time of his death. Investigators also noted that he had burn marks in his trachea, indicating he might have inhaled a considerable amount of smoke and carbon monoxide, which can cause a person to lose consciousness and be fatal in high concentrations. Asked whether the victim could have accidentally killed himself by another cause, such as dropping a cigarette onto himself, Lockhart said the body was burned in such a way as to make it inconsistent with such accidents. Vanzandt's remains were sent to the Oklahoma medical examiner's office in Tulsa and the final autopsy report is pending. *http://5newsonline.com, 18 Feb; KFSM/CNN, dailymail.co.uk, 19 Feb; LiveScience.com, 20 Feb 2013.*

EXTRA! EXTRA!

FT'S FAVOURITE HEADLINES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Pigeons cry fowl over French tax increases

(Melbourne) Sunday Age, 23 Sept 2012

Army of Nazi raccoons force Germans to admit defeat

Metro, 29 Oct 2012.

North Devon Journal, 15 Feb 2013.

Devil's freedom dash over

Canberra Times, 27 Oct 2012.

Pipe-bomb maker keen to keep smoking marijuana

Canberra Times, 24 Oct 2012.

MPs may walk on water

Adelaide Advertiser, 30 Oct 2012.

Celebrities back campaign to catch cancer early

Ealing Gazette, 24 Sept 2012.

Mermaid attacked during Hastings pram race

Brighton Argus, 6 Aug 2012.

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Lightning struck the dome of St Peter's in Rome on 11 February, the day Pope Benedict XVI announced his abdication. According to the Ancient Greeks, a place struck by lightning (enêlusios) was a holy place, set apart from the rest of the world. Our "Elysium" derives from it. We recall that York Minster was stuck by lightning three days after David Jenkins was consecrated Bishop of Durham there on 6 July 1984, resulting in a disastrous fire that some interpreted as a sign of divine wrath at the bishop's heterodox beliefs (**FT43:55**). *Guardian, 12 Feb; D.Telegraph (letter), 13 Feb 2013.*
PHOTO: FILIPPO MONTEFORTE/ AFP / GETTY IMAGES

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Signs out of a clear blue sky

LEFT: The meteorite trail above an apartment block in Chelyabinsk. **RIGHT:** The shockwave damaged buildings and threw pedestrians to the ground.

Four days after the Vatican zap, a 10,000-tonne meteor, about 56ft (17m) across, hurtled at 44,000mph (70,800km/h) across the sky above Russia's Ural Mountains, and exploded in an air burst between 18 and 32 miles (30-50km) above the ground, releasing energy equivalent to 30 Hiroshima bombs. It was the largest such event since something (probably a meteor or comet fragment) exploded over Tunguska in Siberia in 1908.

More than 1,100 people were injured, 31 seriously, and 3,000 buildings damaged. Many of those injured in the city of Chelyabinsk, 900 miles (1,450km) east of Moscow, were hit by broken glass when shockwaves smashed thousands of windows at around 9.20am local time (3.20am GMT). There were bizarre anomalies: behind unbroken windows, glass jugs exploded into shards, dishes cracked, and electronics died. The vapour trail was visible for hundreds of miles around, including in neighbouring Kazakhstan.

Army units found a hole 20ft (6m) wide punched through the thick ice of Lake Chebarkul, 50 miles (80km) to the west of Chelyabinsk – hence the event has been called "the Chebarkul meteor". So far, a fragment

"A terrible burst of light. I thought war had started"

big enough to have made the hole has not been found, but 53 small meteorites have been found nearby. A large number fell in the surrounding region, estimated to weigh 7 tonnes in total. The radiation level was normal, according to local military officials. The meteor has been classified as an ordinary chondrite. Local residents were busy collecting meteorites, many located in snowdrifts, and an informal market soon emerged.

Witnesses described scenes of panic as pedestrians were thrown to the ground by the blast. A student from School No 461 in Chelyabinsk said: "Everything went very bright. There was a very loud sound like the roar of an aeroplane, then an explosion and glass rained down." Another resident described seeing "a terrible burst of scarlet and orange light. My eyes still hurt… the shockwave knocked the glass out of the neighbouring houses. I thought war had started." A group of teenagers said they felt a warm wind on their faces after the flash in the sky. Some feared the world was coming to an end.

Vladimir Zhirinovsky, the head of the ultra-nationalist Liberal-Democratic Party, was true to form with his eccentric pronouncement that the so-called 'meteor' was really a new weapon being tested by the US. "When something falls – it's man-made," he explained. "People are warmongers and provocateurs." Key parts of Russia's civilian and military nuclear industry are located in the Chelyabinsk region, including Mayak, birthplace of the Soviet atom bomb, now used as a waste-processing facility, that saw one of the world's worst nuclear accidents in 1957.

On the same day the meteor broke up over Russia, asteroid 2012DA14, 150ft (46m) wide, passed within a whisker (astronomically speaking) of Earth – about 17,150 miles (27,600km). It was first spotted last year by a Spanish dentist turned amateur astronomer. By the time it reached its closest point, over Indonesia at about 7.25pm GMT, it had passed within the orbit of more than 100 geostationary satellites. Its location was one thirteenth of the distance from the Earth to the Moon. Although smaller asteroids have come nearer to Earth, the approach was the closest for such a large object since records began.

Experts maintained that the two flying rocks were unrelated and moving in different directions – but the religiously minded might see the duel event as a divine warning of some kind. *D.Mail, 14 Feb; RIA Novosti, 15 Feb; Independent, D.Telegraph, Guardian, D.Mail, 16 Feb; Sunday Telegraph, 17 Feb; Int. Herald Tribune, 19 Feb 2013.*

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SIDELINES...

LAND HO

A sickle-shaped island, 35 acres (14ha) in area, has appeared in the German North Sea, 15 miles (24km) off a stretch of coastline in Schleswig-Holstein known as the Wattenmeer. It went from sand bar to land mass in a mere decade and is now home to more than 50 plant species and a variety of sea birds. Dunes up to 16ft (5m) high and grasses help to combat erosion – but a super-storm could wipe it off the map. *D.Mail, 10 Jan; The Lookout, 11 Jan 2013.*

BETTER SAFE THAN SORRY

During a television interview, Sheikh Abdullah Daoud, a Saudi cleric, said that newborn girls would be protected from sexual attacks if they wore burkas. *D.Telegraph, 5 Feb 2013.*

DEFENDING THE PLANET

Two men who walked away from their crashed car on a back road near Wivenhoe Dam in Queensland said they had been chasing an alien spacecraft to save humanity when they were blinded by bright lights. When police found them at 4.10am on 18 January, they were armed with knives and became aggressive, claiming "there were more of them [aliens] around". *Queensland Times, 21 Jan 2013.*

BIRDS BUTT OUT BUGS

House finches and sparrows in Mexico City incorporate discarded cigarette butts in their nests to provide cosy cellulose lining for their chicks and insecticidal nicotine to ward off mites, according to a team from the National Autonomous University, which monitored 57 nests. *(Sydney) D.Telegraph, 6 Dec 2012.*

MARTIN ROSS

On the bayou

Is the Thames home to crocodilians?

JOE RAEDLE / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: Could one of these pull a passing pooch or a Canada goose to its death?

In June 2012, Richard Smith, 64, a retired university lecturer in building sciences, was cycling by the River Thames near Caversham Bridge, 200 yards upriver from Reading Rowing Club, when he saw "what I thought was a bough of a tree with four stubby branches on it close to the bank. As I got closer," he said, "I saw it was a crocodile. It was about 4ft [1.2m] long. It had a 2ft [60cm] tail and a 2ft body. I got off my bike and ran back to where it was, but it had gone. I ran along the river for about 50 yards, but it wasn't there any more." He then recalled another incident when he was walking near the boat chandler at Scours Lane a year earlier and saw a group of Canada geese on the other side of the river. "One goose was pulled under the water, he tipped over on one side, his right wing flapping, then disappeared under the water, not to be seen any more." At he time he imagined the predator was a "very big pike", but having seen what he took to be a crocodile, he thinks that might be the culprit.

He said: "I was talking to someone at a fishing tackle shop recently and I was telling them about this and the man in the shop said he was on the bank of the Thames near Tilehurst station when he saw a fully grown swan pulled down into the water and it totally disappeared. I am not sure whether the crocodile I saw would be big enough to overpower a swan – swans are pretty big. I don't think the crocodile that I saw would be big enough to be very dangerous, but I can imagine in time there might be reports of dogs swimming in the river being caught by it." When asked how he thought a crocodile would survive a British winter, he said: "There are lots of deep holes under the banks along the Thames where it could hibernate."

> **"It could turn into Reading's Loch Ness monster"**

Douglas Coulter from river barge Russell's Teapot told a local journalist: "It's fantastic! It could turn into Reading's Loch Ness monster. I've seen plenty of ducklings and signets going under in spring, but whether it's a crocodile that's doing it then, who knows?" Shaun Foggett, director of Crocodiles of the World in Witney, Oxfordshire, was sceptical. He said that not only would crocodiles perish during an English winter, but also they would even have difficulties in an English summer because of the cold nights. Alligators were a little more "cool tolerant" and could become acclimatised in the summer, but would not survive winter temperatures.

Then a Michael Law called the local paper to suggest an explanation. He said that Peter Wallace, former owner of Caversham Boat Services on Fry's Island, had a souvenir fake croc from the 1973 James Bond movie *Live and Let Die*, which could have floated away in recent floods; a spokeswoman for the boatyard couldn't say whether the croc was still there, but thought it was too heavy to float way. *Reading Post, 20+27 Feb; Get Reading, 22 Feb 2013.*

Richard Smith is not the first to witness Canada geese being pulled under the water at speed. It happened on the Old River Lea stretch alongside Hackney Marshes in east London on 10 July 2005 (**FT204:5**), where 8ft (2.4m) -long holes had been burrowed in the river bank. Speculation concerning the identity of the predator included pike, perch, giant snapping turtle, giant wels catfish – and crocodile. That autumn, a 3ft 6in (1m) alligator was said to be on the loose on Tooting Bec Common in London; the RSPCA couldn't find it, but suggested it was a Bosk monitor lizard. Shortly afterwards, one such was conveniently found dead – not long after a Nile monitor was found alive in Lambeth Park, south London (**FT290:36**).

Another goose vanished beneath the surface of the Lea near the Olympic Park in early November 2011 (**FT285:8**). One witness, barge dweller Mike Wells, said: "A Canada goose weighs about 16lb [7.2kg], so whatever took it was also large." This time, identities for the culprit also included escaped pet python and mink. Tales of dogs being snatched from the towpaths were also doing the rounds among local fishermen.

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Clean energy channels

Extraterrestrial avatar is imprisoned for drugs trafficking

In 1989, Russian steelworker Konstantin Rudnev founded a strict hierarchical sect called Ashram Shambala in the city of Novosibirsk, Siberia. Calling himself "Great Shaman Shri Dzhnan Avatar Muni", he persuaded converts, mainly aged between 14 and 30, to exchange their belongings for the chance to "clean their energy channels" in mystical rituals. They abandoned their relatives and friends and many were reported missing. Ashram Shambala grew rapidly, acquiring up to 30,000 followers at retreats across Russia, making it one of the largest cults in the country. There were also branches in Denmark, Greece and Ukraine. Acolytes, who often thought they were signing up for yoga practice, were urged to use drugs and take part in orgies that centred on Rudnev, who became a multi-millionaire. They were fed thin soup and vegetables and allegedly had to ask permission to go to the lavatory.

Video footage of the group shows scantily clad women chanting and making stabbing movements with a knife in each hand. In another scene, topless women dance around the guru, who sits impassively wearing shades and a shiny tunic with large shoulder pads. Rudnev's teachings were laid down in a book called *The Way of a Fool*, a mishmash of various religions, which urged followers to reject a conventional lifestyle of study, work and family. "Psychological pressure was put on the adherents," said Irina Zebrova, a spokesperson for the FSB, Russia's security service. "People were punished with lack of food and sleep."

Rudnev was arrested in 1999, but escaped from a psychiatric hospital. In 2004 a psychological commission found him criminally insane and he was detained again, but released when his followers refused to give evidence against him. He was arrested again in September 2010, when a packet of heroin was found in his pocket. This time, 16 of his devotees testified against him. He denied all charges during an 18-month closed trial in Novosibirsk and claimed the drugs were found in his pocket because he put on someone else's trousers by mistake. He told the court he was "an extraterrestrial from Sirius, sent to Earth to enlighten people".

Acolytes thought they were signing up for yoga

ABOVE: Konstantin Rudnev, aka 'Great Shaman Shri Dzhnan Avatar Muni'. **LEFT**: With a young female convert

However, Rudnev, now aged 45, was found guilty of rape, drug trafficking, sexual assault and "creating an organisation that infringes on people's personality and rights", sentenced to 11 years in a high-security prison and ordered to pay 3.7 million roubles (£78,000) in compensation to his victims. He said he would appeal. *[RIA Novosti], dailymail.co.uk, 7 Feb; D.Telegraph, 9 Feb 2013.* For another cult leader in Siberia – ex-traffic policeman Sergei Torop calling himself "Vissarion" – see **FT126:6, 231:5.**

SIDELINES...

DOOMED SPEEDER

A man who led police on a high-speed chase through Somerset on 15 December said it was on a list of things he wanted to do before he died in the Mayan apocalypse on 21 December. Timothy Lazenby, 50, ignored officers as he drove without lights at 70mph in a 50mph zone. He also sped on the wrong side of the road through towns. *Sun, 1 Feb 2013.*

DAZED & CONFUSED

A driver was so drunk when stopped that he tried to use the police breath-test machine to call his lawyer. Bernhard Becker, 41, mistook the device for an iPhone. "He grabbed it and was trying to bring up the icons on the display," said police in Coburg, Bavaria. *Metro, 5 Dec 2012.*

DREAM WIN

Maria Forgione from North Branford, Connecticut, who won a $2 million prize in the record-breaking Powerball draw on 28 November, said her late father had shown her the winning numbers in a dream the night before. *Hartford (CT) Courant, 30 Nov 2012.*

SLIME THERAPY

A South African woman claims to have discovered the secret of anti-ageing – snail facials. Edith Pangle, 62, lets garden snails crawl over her face, neck and hands as part of a weekly beauty regimen. She had seen ads for creams featuring snail extract, said to reduce wrinkles, acne and scarring. *MX News (Sydney), 22 Sept 2012.*

MARTIN ROSS

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SIDELINES...

BANG THAT CHICKEN

A 16-year-old youth from Karangasem, Bali, referred to as KS, was caught screwing a chicken he had throttled. He was brought to the police but released after brief questioning. KS said he was ordered to do it by a spirit, who made him see the chicken as a beautiful girl. A month earlier, he was found having sex with a cow. *Bali Advertiser, 14-28 Nov 2012.*

ROUND EGG

A man found a perfectly spherical 21p hen's egg and sold it on eBay for £91. Mark Cameron, 45, a forklift driver from Thamesmead, south London, was about to make an omelette when he spotted the oddity. He discovered that only two had been found in as many years and decided to auction it for charity. *Sun, 26 Dec 2012.*

FRIEND IN NEED

A man who collapsed at work with a heart attack was saved when his 15 stone (95kg) friend fell on him and the impact jump-started his heart. Kevin Brockbank, 54, keeled over during a coffee break at a Dundee printing press. Martin Amriding reached out to grab his friend of 35 years, but was dragged down with him. "I felt awful because I thought I had really hurt him," said Mr Amriding. "Then I found out I had actually saved his life." *D.Telegraph, D.Express, 11 Dec 2012.*

MARTIN ROSS

MAN'S BEST FRIEND

A DOGGIE HEIMLICH MANŒUVRE AND OTHER SPECTAULAR CANINE RESCUES

DAN JAMES / CATERS NEWS AGENCY

ABOVE: Assistance dog Millie, who alerted paramedics to her owner Paul McKenzie's coma by pressing his emergency button.

Sheba, a four-year-old Japanese Akita, was asleep in the kitchen when her owner Aysha Perry got a 1.6in (4cm) piece of chicken stuck in her throat. The pet awoke as the tattoo artist gasped for air in the living room, and bounded over. "She whacked me on the back with one of her huge paws and the piece of chicken flew out," said Aysha. "I've got to say it hurt a little as she is such a huge dog – but I can't complain. I was at home on my own and genuinely thought I was going to die. Sheba began licking my face to make sure I was OK. She could obviously sense I was in distress." Aysha, 18, from Sutton-in-Ashfield, Nottinghamshire, was eating in front of the TV when she choked on 19 October. Her flatmate was out and she was groping on the floor for her phone to fetch help when Sheba stepped in. She had only owned the dog for two weeks. *Metro, D.Star, 25 Oct 2012.*

Lydia Bigras, Louise Morgan and Yves Savard went for a walk in Goldstream Provincial Park, British Columbia, on 26 November to look for eagles during the salmon-spawning season. While walking down a trail, Roo, Bigras's four-year-old Australian terrier,

None of the humans had noticed the tree was falling

started rooting around a fern, which was odd behaviour for the dog. All of a sudden, Roo jumped up and ran back the way they had come. Bigras, who had Roo on a leash, was thrown off balance and forced to run with him to stay on her feet. The others saw her running and did likewise out of confusion and instinct more than anything. Moments later, a 40ft to 60ft (12m–18m) cedar crashed down where the group had been standing. None of the humans had noticed any signs the tree was falling. It fell so close to Bigras that branches cut her face. *Saanich News (Victoria, BC), 7 Dec 2012.*

In February this year, an 85-year-old woman went for an evening stroll near her home in Broomfield, near Chelmsford in Essex, and tumbled into a deep trench surrounded by brambles. She lay there for 12 hours, too weak to scramble out. By chance Jackie Short, 70, a retired teacher, was walking nearby early the following morning with her rescue dogs, Rosie and Jennie. Rosie, a 10-year-old German shepherd and collie cross, pulled in the direction of the ditch and whimpered when Ms Short pulled her away. She then began to howl and Ms Short realised she ought to investigate. Using a torch to peer through the darkness, she spotted the pensioner's boots poking from the trench. Hearing the sound of a dustcart, she ran to the nearby road and fetched help. Three dustmen then hauled the woman out. Ms Short said: "As I shone the torch in the ditch, I heard a very faint voice saying, 'Help me, please'. I couldn't believe this little old lady had spent all night in a ditch. She was in a collapsed state and, had she been there much longer, the outcome might have been tragic. I'm really proud of Rosie. If I didn't have Rosie, I would have just walked past." The dog had spent the early part of her life confined to a pen in Greece until being rescued by an animal charity called Desperate Greekies. *D.Telegraph, 8 Feb 2013.*

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Every few hours during the night, Laurie Reidy's 18-month-old cavalier King Charles spaniel puppy Jessie kept jumping on him at the family home in Aramara, west of Maryborough in Queensland, trying to get him outside. "She normally lets me sleep till about 5am before she wants to be let out," he said. Mr Reidy was in the house alone, preparing for a party over the weekend, and had locked up because of the chilly night. He finally went out with Jessie at 6.20am. Just before he lost consciousness, he found he could barely walk and noticed Jessie was shaking and drooling. He came to more than half an hour later. What Jessie realised but he didn't was that throughout the night, a gas fridge in the building had been slowly expelling deadly carbon monoxide. Inhaling the colourless, odourless gas reduces the blood's ability to carry oxygen. "It's just lucky I got outside before I passed out," said Mr Reidy. *Queensland Times, 5 May 2012.*

A boxer dog called Poppy saved its family's life by barking in the night when their house in Canworthy Water, Cornwall, began to fill with carbon monoxide. Liz Boult, her sons Charlie Prewett, seven, and Ollie Prewett, four, and Ms Boult's partner Richard Harris were taken to Derriford Hospital. A wood-burning stove is thought to have produced potentially lethal CO levels. Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service said the amount of gas detected in the house could have killed the family within minutes. Carbon monoxide poisoning kills about 50 people in the UK every year. *BBC News, 23 Jan 2013.*

Louis, a nine-year-old Yorkshire terrier, pressed a panic button to summon help when his disabled owner collapsed. Victoria Shaw, 58, from Wrexham, North Wales, who has glaucoma and arthritis, had trained Louis to call for assistance. "But it's always been a bit of a game," she said. "This is the first time he's done it for real. He's not only my best friend and companion, but also my soul mate." On 13 May, she tripped and knocked herself unconscious getting out of the shower. Due to her disability, she was registered with Wrexham Council's Telecare service, so she had emergency panic buttons. Telecare operative Sarah Mcloughlin was greeted with barking when she asked if Mrs Shaw was OK, and had an ambulance sent round. Mrs Shaw was left with a headache and dizziness, and trouble bending her leg, but nothing more serious. *telegraph.co.uk, 16 May 2012.*

When Paul McKenzie, 47, passed out in a diabetic coma at his home in Derrington, Staffordshire, his assistance dog, a black labrador called Millie, alerted paramedics via an emergency button. McKenzie, who has neuropathy (nerve damage, a common complication of diabetes), had taught Millie to press the button when he shouted "Alarm!"; but she pressed the button of her own accord when she found him unconscious in November. Millie was provided by the canine assistance charity Canine Partners. *D.Telegraph, D.Mail, 21 Dec 2012.*

Toby, a seven-year-old Lhasa apso, saved his owner from drowning by running more than half a mile to raise the alarm. While on a woodland walk, Derek Ramsden, 81, had fallen perilously close to a pool of mud and was in danger of disappearing beneath the surface. Toby alerted security staff at Brynowen Holiday Park in Borth, Aberystwyth, and two men rescued Mr Ramsden in the nick of time. He said he had managed to grab a railing on a nearby bridge, adding: "I could not get out and you can't hold your grip for long at my age. I was scared I was going to tumble down the bank. Toby definitely saved my life. He led the way and kept stopping for the helpers to catch up. He is a hero, my very own Lassie." Mr Ramsden was on holiday with his wife Ada. The fall did not cause serious injury but he bruised his back and was recovering at home in Halifax. *D.Express, 27 Sept 2012.*

ABOVE: Aysha Perry's dog, Sheeba, saved her owner by giving her pat on the back.

ROSS PARRY AGENCY / ROSSPARRY.CO.UK

SIDELINES...

COCKY WILLY

Lynne Taylor of Rhode Island was accused of violating animal noise regulations by teaching Willy, her cockatoo, to swear at her neighbours – who happen to be her ex-husband and his girlfriend. *(Brisbane) Courier-Mail, 12 Sept 2012.*

TRUNK AND DISORDERLY

Houses, shops and crops in the village of Dumurkota, eastern India, were damaged by 50 drunken elephants that went on the rampage after discovering 110 gallons of mahua, a powerful brew of bootleg alcohol. They demolished dozens of houses searching for more drink. *Metro, 6 Nov; Sunday Times, 11 Nov 2012.*

FATEFUL BITE

Homeless Jordace Sinclair, 19, sank his teeth into Tatenda Kamasho's cheek and stabbed him in the arm for "talking too loudly" in a Northampton McDonald's. The bite turned septic and Kamasho, 19, was put into a medically induced coma. He woke up five days later, convinced he was President Obama and suffering hallucinations. He was sectioned under the Mental Health Act; his assailant was jailed for five years. *Sun, 26 Oct 2012.*

LONG SHOT

A jilted man beheaded as ostrich and drank its blood – hoping other birds would peck him to death in Shaoguan, China. *Sun, 23 Jan 2013.*

BONE MAGIC

Thai police arrested five men – including an abbot and two monks – for digging up three graves at a temple in Khon Kaen, stealing skulls and using them to make love talismans, which associates would then peddle in Hong Kong. The skulls were broken up and a monk had chosen "good looking" fragments, on which he drew a picture of a naked woman and a few supposedly "magic" inscriptions. About 350 skull fragments were seized. *Bangkok Post, 26 Oct 2012.*

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SIDELINES...

YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE

An official record of things given to Elizabeth II last year included a knitted tea cosy featuring Her Majesty and her corgis, a baby llama, a Lego sculpture of Tower Bridge, a plastic paperweight containing a pillar of salt, 60 rose bushes from the Isle of Man, a dog bed in the shape of a crown and adoption rights to a baby Asian elephant. *D.Telegraph, 17 Jan 2013*.

SARTORIAL SIGNALS

The Teachers Foundation of Malaysia has announced that wearing a V-neck jumper or a sleeveless T-shirt are signs that a man may be gay. Homosexuality is outlawed in the country. Deputy education minister Mohd Puad Zarkashi said the advice would help parents spot 'tell-tale' signs. *D.Mail, 16 Jan 2013*.

OH OWLY, OWLY

John Mackay, 58, was walking with friends near Inverness when he was knocked over by an owl. He was bleeding heavily from the back of his head and needed hospital treatment. "I thought I had been hit by a brick," he said, adding that the bird was about 2ft (60cm) tall. *Sun, 26 Jan 2013.*

JUST NOT READY

A man declared dead in 1936 celebrated his 106th birthday last November. Sam Ledward, of Gwernaffield, Flintshire, 'woke up' while being transported to a mortuary in a coma after a motorcycle accident. *D.Telegraph, 13 Nov 2012.*

HATCHLING HORROR

Three-year-old Kyle Cumming found a nest of eggs in his backyard in Townsville, Queensland, and took them to his bedroom. Several weeks later, on 17 December, his mother Donna Sim opened his wardrobe and found a takeaway container with seven snake hatchlings, later identified as eastern brown snakes, the world's second deadliest species on land after the inland taipan. Fortunately, they weren't large enough to push off the lid. *[AP] (Queensland) Courier-Mail, 20 Dec 2012*.

HAVING A BALL IN PURPLE AND WHITE

GERARDINE VARGAS

LENA OLMSTED

On 27 January, Geradine Vargas and her husband were in the desert near Vail, southeast of Tucson, Arizona, when they saw thousands of tiny, purple-hued spheres piled in the middle of nowhere glittering in the sun. They were watery, and some were translucent. Mrs Vargas sent pictures of the spheres (top) to KGUN-9-TV in Tucson. Someone from the station investigated and said: "They're like gooey marbles that ooze out a water substance when squished. They roll, they shine, and they're out of this world." They contacted the botanist husband of Darlene Buhrow, director of marketing at Tucson Botanical Gardens, who said that if the spheres were natural, they could be a slime mold or jelly fungus. Callers to the newsroom suggested they were a product like Deco Beads – tiny coloured water-filled spheres used to keep plants hydrated. But thousands of them? In the middle of the desert? *KGUN-9-TV (Tucson, AZ), 30 Jan 2013.*

By 21 February, thousands of ice balls (above), some weighing up to 75lb (34kg), had accumulated along the shores of Lake Michigan, particularly at the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, where they stretched away as far as the eye could see in a 30 to 40ft (9-12m) swathe. The icy spheres apparently form much the way that smooth stones do, starting in chunks that break off from the lake's larger ice sheets before being smoothed by the waves and washed or blown ashore. We are told the phenomenon isn't rare, but the ice boulders this year were larger than normal. *lansingstatejournal.com, 26 Feb; nbcchicago.com, 28 Feb; itechpost.com, 3 Mar 2013.*

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TANGLED TAILS

BOB RICKARD is coaxed down from his favourite tree to discuss the strange and rarely observed quirk of nature that is the squirrel king

LEFT: The five tangled squirrels in the photo posted online by 'mard86'.

On 13 September 2012, our esteemed colleague Mike Dash alerted us to a photo of a new squirrel king – by which I mean one previously unknown to us. It appeared on the image-sharing site IMGUR, posted by 'mard86' and accompanied by a brief caption: "My co-worker sent an email saying he would be late because he was trying to untie a squirrel tail knot. I asked for a picture, and he delivered." [1] Almost immediately, responding posters split into two main groups: one relishing the genre of outlandish excuses for being late for work, and the other expressing emotions from wonder to revulsion. Some were more ready to believe that the photograph was faked than to accept the phenomenon as a bizarre quirk of nature.

A few minutes later 'mard86' posted the full version of his colleague's communication: "I was pressed into squirrel rescue this morning on my way out. 5 young squirrels got tangled in Christmas lights in my neighbour's yard. We got the lights off, but now their tails are one big knot, so I have to bring them into a rescue place to untie them, as I am unequipped to untie squirrel tail knots. I should be in this afternoon." Unfortunately, my attempts to contact 'mard86' have elicited no response, so I was unable to locate his friend's furry encounter, but from the context it seems likely to be central or northern USA. No further images were posted.

We have noted three earlier examples of squirrel kings:

- On Sunday, 24 September 1989, a teenager on her way to church in Easton, Pennsylvania, noticed a commotion in the hedge outside her house and found a writhing furry bundle of six young squirrels all squeaking at once. At first she thought they were playing, but she soon realised they were in a panic. As they pulled in all directions at once, they had become firmly stuck among the trunks of the bushes. With help from her family, a neighbour and some onlookers, she rescued the group from the hedge, but they could not be disentangled and were put to sleep (**FT63:13**).

- On 18 September 1991, a group of five young squirrels was seen to fall out of a tree near a school in Baltimore, Maryland. They were taken away by Animal Control officers who later brought them back for release. Apparently, they separated "quite easily" as their knot was stuck together by tree sap, hair, and nesting debris. A professor at the University of Maryland, an expert on squirrels, said that the phenomenon was rare, but made rarer still because two of the five were white. What, we wondered,

MESSINGER WOODS WILDLIFE CARE AND EDUCATION CENTRE

ABOVE: A tangle of young squirrels is removed from a tree and separated by Margie Hanrahan of the Messinger Woods Wildlife Care and Education Center in New York.

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were the odds on two albino members of a squirrel king? (**FT63:13**)

● In July 1997, five squirrels, about eight to 10 weeks old, were found under a tree in Brantford, Ontario, with their tails braided together "right up to their butts". They were taken to a veterinary clinic where they were wrapped in a towel and untangled. It was thought they would lose part of their tails because blood circulation had been restricted for at least a day or two. The vet believed they had been braided together by human agency (**FT104:11**).

mard86's picture was picked up a few days later by MinnesotaStan, a blogger whose site *Things You Wouldn't Know If We Didn't Blog Intermittently* (TYWKIWDBI) is on my browsing list as it contains much of fortean interest.[2] To add to the strangeness of this topic, MinnesotaStan also links to several tangled heads: one a clump of three stags who could not disentangle their horns,[3] and the other the jammed tusks of a pair of fossilised mammoths excavated near Crawford in 1962, who fought and died still linked together during the Ice Age.[4]

Finally, MinnesotaStan and a poster on Reddit both mentioned a site run by the Messinger Woods Wildlife Care and Education Center in Orchard Park, New York, and here we found several other cases new to us. The Messinger Woods Center site carries a well-illustrated step-by-step guide to untangling a knot of squirrels – the fruit of their experience of this unusual problem – along with some general information about how the tangles can form. Again we hear of sticky (pine) sap and nesting debris made worse by squirming and panic, rather than an actual knotted or fused tail.

The main illustrated example concerns six young squirrels found by someone out for a walk at Cheektowaga, New York, on 14 August 2006.[5] The Good Samaritan spotted them lying in a heap on the grass, exhausted, and took them in a box to the Messinger Woods Center, where they were received by Margie Hanrahan, a board member in charge of animal rehabilitation. Three of the creatures were dead so their tails could be cut off, simplifying their disentanglement. The survivors were treated for minor injuries and dehydration and later released back into the wild.

The page also links to a PDF file of photos of another cluster of squirrels that was rescued out of a tree at Hamburg, New York, on 1 May 2006. On this occasion, Margie and two colleagues had to extract the bundle from the crook of a tree themselves, wearing protective gloves and taking care not to break any tails. She told me, "We untangled them right on the spot and freed them immediately as the mother was still there chirping at us. They were otherwise healthy." Of the third incident, Margie couldn't find any record, except that she and her colleagues knew of it.

There wasn't much more to be found about squirrel kings and the remainder of the online discussion lurched off to the related topic of rat kings ... but more on that another time.

We'd like to thank Margie Hanrahan and her colleagues at the Messinger Woods Wildlife Care and Education Center, Orchard Park, NY, for taking the trouble to date their incidents and for permission to reproduce the Center's images.

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5 http://www.messingerwoods.org/tangledtails.htm and http://www.messingerwoods.org/twistedtaleoftwistedtails.pdf + personal communications.

Mythconceptions

by Mat Coward

163. MISSING PERSONS

The myth

You have to wait 24 hours before reporting a compos mentis adult as a missing person; or, in another version, the police will not begin to look for missing persons until they've been missing 24 (or 48) hours. This is to avoid wasting resources, because almost all "missing" people turn up again of their own accord.

HUNT EMERSON

The "truth"

We all know this "fact" of police procedure from its use in fiction, where a patronising copper assures a distraught wife that "He'll roll home in the morning, love, with his tail between his legs, you see if he don't." But it's not true, in the UK or the USA, and many law enforcement and missing persons websites explicitly debunk it. The British Government's information portal, for instance, has the line "You don't have to wait 24 hours before contacting the police" highlighted. The Essex Police site is equally explicit: if you are "concerned" about a person who you believe is missing, it says, "report them as missing to your local police force immediately – remember, you *do not* have to wait 24 hours." New Zealand Police (Nga Pirihimana O Aotearoa) also stress that there is no 24-hour reporting delay, while the Los Angeles PD comes up with an interesting twist: "Contrary to public belief, federal law prohibits the observance of a waiting period before accepting a M/P report."

Sources

www.gov.uk/report-missing-person; www.essex.police.uk/pdf/missing_persons.pdf; www.lapdonline.org/lapd_adult_missing_persons_unit; http://lib.post.ca.gov/Publications/missing.pdf; www.police.govt.nz/service/missing-persons/reporting-missing-person

Disclaimer

I've been unable to find any example of the 24/48-hour rule being true in any jurisdiction – but if you know of one, please report it to the letters page without delay.

Mythchaser

An obvious question arises from the above: where does the 24-hour MisPer myth come from? Was it true in the past, perhaps? Or did a naughty thriller writer invent it from scratch?

FOR MORE MYTHCONCEPTIONS, GO TO:
www.forteantimes.com/strangedays/mythbusters

MATT PATTINSON

JUMP-STARTING THE DEAD

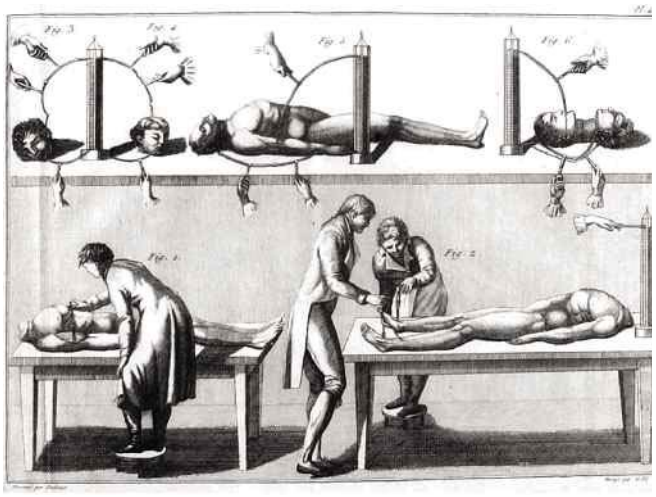
From Paracelsus to Frankenweenie, scientists (including mad ones) have searched for a way of harnessing the Divine Spark of life, says **DAVID HAMBLING**

Mad scientists with improbable schemes for resurrection – generally ending in disaster – are a staple of science fiction. Almost 200 years after Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Tim Burton's *Frankenweenie* presents a comedy version in which a boy brings his dog back to life – and science is still not to be trusted.

It's firmly in the horror genre, because, as Shelley said: "Frightful *must* it be; for *SUPREMELY* frightful would be the effect of any human endeavour to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world." Romantics are still appalled by this trespass on sacred ground, and Shelley remains a prime mover in persuading the world that if scientists commit this type of blasphemy, Bad Things Will Happen.

Frankenstein did not set out to bring back the dead. Subtitled 'The Modern Prometheus', Shelley's novel was about a man who wanted, like the Titan Prometheus in Greek mythology, to create new life. Prometheus, like the God of Genesis, worked with clay, and occultists sought to imitate the creation by animating man-like clay beings called Golem (see **FT215:13;** and Ivan Mackerle, 'The Golem of Prague', **238:30–37**). To add a modern twist, Shelley invoked Galvani's work with frogs' legs – he had shown how they could be made to twitch with a jolt of electricity even when the frog was dead (see Sarah Bakewell, 'It's Alive!', **FT139:34–39**). This suggested that inanimate matter could be brought to life with the right spark – the spark that Victor Frankenstein would use to animate his creature.

Frankenstein's raw material comes from charnel houses, the vaults where human bones are stored, as well as dissecting rooms and slaughterhouses, indicating that he worked with a mixture of human and animal components. The difficulty of working with minute parts forces him to scale up his creature to something 8ft (2.4m) high; a convenient plot device to make the creature dangerously large. Such enlargement would not make any of the detail work much less fiddly, and the result would likely be cumbersome rather than menacing.



Paracelsus did not work from scratch: human semen was a key ingredient

Shelley also namechecks the great Paracelsus, a 16th-century master alchemist who, among other things, claimed to have created an artificial human known as a homunculus (see David Hambling, 'Mercurial Magician', **FT157:30–34**), which perhaps makes him the true Frankenstein.[1] Rather than electricity, he was interested in 'putrefaction', which did not mean simply decay, but a range of what we might call biochemical processes. Paracelsus quotes John 12:24 saying that the putrefaction of a grain of wheat produces the growing seedling.

Like Frankenstein, Paracelsus did not work entirely from scratch; human semen was a key ingredient, with a fermenting mixture of horse manure providing the putrefaction. As with Frankenstein, Paracelsus was successful in bringing his creation to life, only for it to escape later. The key difference was that rather than being larger than the average human, his homunculus was only about a foot tall. However, Paracelsus indicated that the same technique could be used to create "pygmies, giants, and other great and monstrous men."[2]

Paracelsus also apparently pioneered the art of bringing animals back to life. He describes an experiment in which a chicken is burned to dust and ashes in a sealed glass vessel, and then, again with fermenting horse manure, transformed into a phlegm that regenerates into the living bird: "By this process all birds can be killed and again made to live… this is the very greatest and highest miracle."[3] It's an incredible claim, even for someone who was centuries ahead of his time in other aspects of medicine.

Since then, scientists have developed more sophisticated approaches. In 2002, scientists at Texas A&M University succeeded in cloning a cat.[4] As with Frakenweenie, one of the goals was to be able to recreate a deceased pet. Of course, a clone is not the same as the original, but could be seen as the next best thing. The process involves removing the nucleus from a fertilised egg cell, and replacing it with a donor nucleus from the original cat. It turns out that the magic needed to fuse the two together into a single entity which will grow into a living being is just what Frankenstein used – an electric shock, albeit a minute one.

The result of this cloning, known as CC, looks nothing like the original moggy. This is due to a curious genetic quirk of tortoiseshell cats (see **FT254:15**), and highlights that cloning is a poor way to bring back the dead.

Perhaps though, the last laugh goes to Luigi Galvani, whose research provided the spark for *Frankenstein*. Hardly a week goes by without a story like "I was dead for 29 minutes"[5] describing how someone was saved by defibrillation after their heart failed. No medical drama is complete without a scene where the hero shouts "Clear!" before placing the sizzling paddles on a patient's chest. The defibrillator delivers an electric shock to the heart muscles; this can control fibrillation, uncoordinated contraction, rather than restarting the heart directly as usually depicted.

You might quibble with the issue of whether such people are really 'dead', and whether this procedure counts as bringing people back from the dead. What is certain is that they certainly *would* be dead without Dr Galvani's discovery. In an everyday miracle, human endeavour restores life by tinkering with mechanisms put there by the Creator. So we say to Ms Shelley, 200 years after her attempt to persuade us otherwise, that electric resurrection is not at all 'frightful' – it's just another medical procedure.

So that's Weird Science 1 – Romantics 0.

1 www.forteantimes.com/features/articles/248/paracelsus_the_mercurial_mage.html

2 http://arcade.stanford.edu/journals/rofl/articles/artificial-men-alchemy-transubstantiation-and-homunculus-by-mary-baine-campbell

3 http://archive.org/stream/hermeticandalch00paragoog/hermeticandalch00paragoog_djvu.txt

4 http://news.nationalgeographic.co.uk/

5 www.foxsports.com.au/olympic-games/from-deathbed-to-world-champ/story-fn5k3iok-1226465885457

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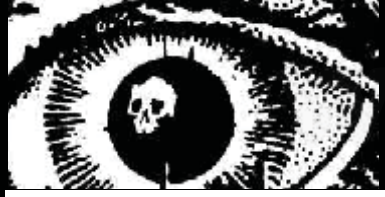

MATT PATTINSON

GHOSTWATCH

ALAN MURDIE reports on a conference on psychical research in the history of science and medicine

LEFT: A Palladino séance in the 1890s. **OPPOSITE:** SORRAT members levitate a table in the 1960s.

The early years of the Society for Psychical Research and the its personalities have recently become a field of interest for historians of science and culture, showing at the very least psychical research "has a great future behind it" as readers of Deborah Blum's *The Ghost Hunters* (2009) and Trevor Hamilton's *Immortal Longings* (2010) might put it. Scholars are retracing and expanding a path originally laid down by researchers in the 1960s (e.g. *The Founders of Psychical Research*, 1968, by Alan Gauld).

Much has been written about the early periods of the British and American societies, but investigations into spirits flourished in many parts of Europe at the same time in the wake of the spiritualist movement that swept the world from its beginnings in March 1848 in Hydesville in the United States. (This deserves to be hailed as one of the greatest ever American exports – the spiritual equivalent of Coca-Cola and Ford cars.)

Leading scientists and some of the greatest pioneers of modern psychology conducted international investigations into mediumship, séance room phenomena and obscure mental states in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Rediscovering this remarkable heritage was one of the many pleasures of 'Psychical Research and Parapsychology in the History of Medicine and the Sciences', a special conference organised by scholar Andreas Sommer and held at the Centre for the History of Psychological Disciplines at University College London on 25–27 January. It drew academics and researchers from across Europe, North and South America, the Far East and New Zealand.

As an interested observer, I was fascinated by the range of presentations and scholarship displayed. The audience was acquainted with scientists' and philosophers' unjustly forgotten attempts to investigate psychic abilities and discover the truth about claimed contact with the dead by mediums.

To take one paper at random from a packed programme, Geoffrey Blowers, Wang Xue Lai and Chin Hei Wong of the University of Hong Kong revealed the brief flowering of psychical research in China immediately after World War I. This led to the foundation of the Lingxue Society, which fused ideas derived from Western psychical research and traditional Chinese spirit beliefs. The Lingxue Society established a temple of research, with a resident medium, and published a specialist journal dedicated to "the study of the big problem concerning relationships between humans and ghosts". Articles in the journal (which ran to 18 editions) included "the eating habits of ghosts" and "the dressing of ghosts". It also published examples of ornate calligraphy supposedly transmitted from beyond the grave by members of ancient Chinese dynasties.

THE LINGXUE SOCIETY'S JOURNAL HAD AN ARTICLE ABOUT THE EATING HABITS OF GHOSTS

Maria Teresa Brancaccio from the University of Maastricht spoke on the forgotten work of Professor Enrico Morselli, an Italian neurologist and psychiatrist who in 1901–1907 held over 30 séances with the controversial medium Eusapia Palladino (1853–1918). Arguments over whether Palladino was a fraud or not have raged for over a century and continue even though all originally involved are long dead themselves.

Eusapia Palladino was a Sicilian peasant woman found abandoned as a baby in 1853 and adopted by a family, which later employed her as a maid. From adolescence, she became the centre of minor poltergeist activity, including the pulling off of bedclothes and weird sounds. Like other poltergeist girls before her, Eusapia's talents blossomed into full-blown physical mediumship. Her willingness to exhibit her powers to move objects, make imprints on clay, cause luminous effects, raps, touches, cold winds and materialisations led to numerous studies for over 20 years.

Though caught engaging in trickery, she convinced a number of leading scientists from around Europe that she had genuine psychic powers. Her performances – which at times were hysterical and sexually suggestive – seemed to have upset members of the Society for Psychical Research who held sittings with her in Cambridge in 1895, but she was treated more sympathetically by researchers in the rest of Europe. Further investigations by researchers from the British SPR returned a positive verdict in 1908, but her reputation never recovered from being caught cheating on a tour of America in 1910, and her powers waned. Morselli had doubts about the observational reliability of fellow sitters, but he theorised that effects were caused by a collective energy produced by Palladino and the sitters.

Annette Mulberger and Andrea Graus of the Autonomous University of Barcelona presented a paper on cases of mental dissociation and of mediumistic voices in Spanish working class women in the 19th century. Physicians and spiritualists were divided: some saw the phenomena – which included poltergeist-like incidents – as manifestations of unconscious secondary personalities; others favoured possession by discarnate spirits. Interestingly, as with many cases in Britain, the symptoms of possession appeared predominantly in young women in the servant class.

Heather Woffram reminded us of the risks that mediums of the time could experience in her examination of the German state's attempts to suppress female mediums and the social reaction to this. She looked at sensational fraud trials involving female mediums in the early 20th century, which inspired a small number of jurists and criminologists to invent a new type of female criminal: "the female hysterical criminal".

Julia Gyimesi of the University of Applied Sciences in Budapest spoke about psychical research and psychoanalysis, and gave long-overdue attention to the remarkable contributions of Hungarians to psychical research. Hungary has produced a number of famous researchers such as Nandor Fodor

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(1895–1964), Paul Tabori (1908–74) and Arthur Koestler (1905–83), whose legacy founded the Koestler Chair of Parapsychology at the University of Edinburgh. But long forgotten was the medium Lajos Pap, whose speciality was the materialisation of objects (so-called 'apports'). Whereas most mediums produced small objects such as coins, medals or flowers, Pap's highly fortean speciality was the materialisation of live creatures including birds, lizards, toads, and lobsters. These apported biological specimens were housed and displayed at a special museum in Budapest. Alas, this fascinating institution was destroyed by bombing in World War II.

As these topics were all being discussed at a history conference, it might be assumed that dramatic examples of mediumship are a thing of the past. There is a widespread view that many dramatic séance effects such as ectoplasm seem to have come to an end around 1945; refinements in infra-red photography enabled better detection of trickery in darkness. Consequently, although particular researchers might occasionally encounter apparently inexplicable incidents in séance rooms, the feeling has long been that the great days of physical mediumship are well and truly over, and that the subject has become one for the historian.

However, Professor Ivor Grattan-Guinness impressively refuted such assumptions in a keynote address. (The professor, a retired historian of science, studied under Karl Popper, the 20th century's leading philosopher of science, so it may be noted that he is no intellectual lightweight). He spoke about his personal experiences with two groups experimenting with physical mediumship in Britain and the USA.

The one that met at Scole, Norfolk, in the mid-1990s invited a number of psychical researchers, many of whom afterwards reported having witnessed unexplained events. Among the observers were skilled conjurors; at least one, James Webster, was convinced the phenomena were genuine.

Professor Gratton-Guinness recalled he succeeded in capturing a moving particle of light and closing his hand over it at one of the Scole séances, only to have it vanish without trace in his hand.

However, far more significant were his contacts and experiences in connection with the long-established American Society for Research on Rapport and Telekinesis (SORRAT) group, which operated from a farm near Columbia, Missouri. It was founded in 1961 under the leadership of G Neihardt (1881–1973), to revive the practice of old-style spiritualist séances.

Over many years, the SORRAT circles claim to have obtained apports, the levitations of furniture and planchette boards, psychic photographs and assorted other proofs of survival beyond death. Some of their experiments and results have been published in book form, but SORRAT has never been anxious for publicity. One now deceased former member, William Cox, designed a 'mini-lab' – a secure glass case, within an isolation chamber, in which objects move, appear or disappear without any human touch, though the alleged findings have been dogged by criticism and controversy. The SORRAT group has also received many mysterious letters supposedly written by psychic means by discarnate entities, and delivered inside the sealed 'mini-labs'.

Experimenters write out a query, leaving space for an answer, and enclose it within a self-addressed envelope. The envelope is sealed, signed across the seal, and left in the isolation chamber or mini-lab; some weeks later, the letter is delivered to sender with the answer filled in and no sign of tampering. Various signatures and names such as 'Explicator' are given with answers always in English, though the questions can be put in other languages.

Examples of the letters reveal a rather curly script, which reminded me of the style of 'Donald', the letter-writing poltergeist of Battersea from the mid-1950s, investigated by the late Andrew Green (soon to be the subject of a book by researcher James Clark). However, the SORRAT group's alleged correspondence has far exceeded the output of 'Donald', with many thousands of examples having been obtained during the last 50 years. They are rather general, without specific scientific content, but can contain surprises. There is a knowledge of the parapsychological field, but nothing that goes beyond the questioner's belief system.

Members of SORRAT have also reported various other psychic phenomena including telepathy, clairvoyance, out-of-the-body experiences and precognition, in addition to messages derived from rapping out letters of the alphabet and planchette communications. Professor Grattan-Guinness emphasised that despite changing membership over the decades, this collection of individuals has kept these sessions going for half a century. Whilst the duration of such practices is not proof of paranormality in itself, the results of the SORRAT group suggest one of three alternatives: a long-running hoax; proof – at the very least – of paranormal phenomena of the psychokinetic variety outside laboratories and in séance-like conditions derived from the discarnate entities or the minds of sitters; or an explanation that has yet to be proposed.

Few people reading the records of such experiments and observations for the first time – especially the complete original accounts – can feel other than a sense of bewilderment. In ordinary life we know that these things do not appear to happen, and it is hard to bring our minds to accept that some psychic power or discarnate entities might be writing thousands of letters over half a century on a farm in Missouri.

Against this we have the testimony of serious and experienced researchers who were convinced by what they had witnessed. What we should avoid is any *a priori* assumption that things do not occur simply because we believe they cannot happen. Indeed, many of these events have parallels in poltergeist activity, a point made by the late Maurice Grosse, veteran investigator of spontaneous cases, who was met with a rather frosty reception when he began to propose to the Scole group that reported effects resembled those observed in poltergeist incidents.

Survival researchers have not pursued this issue; if valid, it could have major implications for results gathered by many ghost hunting organisations in Britain, America and other parts of the developed world. The last two decades have seen a dramatic expansion in amateur psychic research groups, a number of which report encountering inexplicable events on ghost hunts, particularly as noises and object movements, which they attributed to discarnate intervention.

But what if – in an unwitting replication of Victorian séance conditions – groups are actually generating psychokinetic effects themselves?

SOURCES

SORRAT: A History of the Neihardt Psychokinesis Experiments, *1961–1981,* by John Thomas Richards; Ivor Grattan-Guinness, lecture 26 January 2013; *The Scole Report* (1999, 2011) by Montague Keen, Arthur Ellison and David Fontana, published by the SPR.

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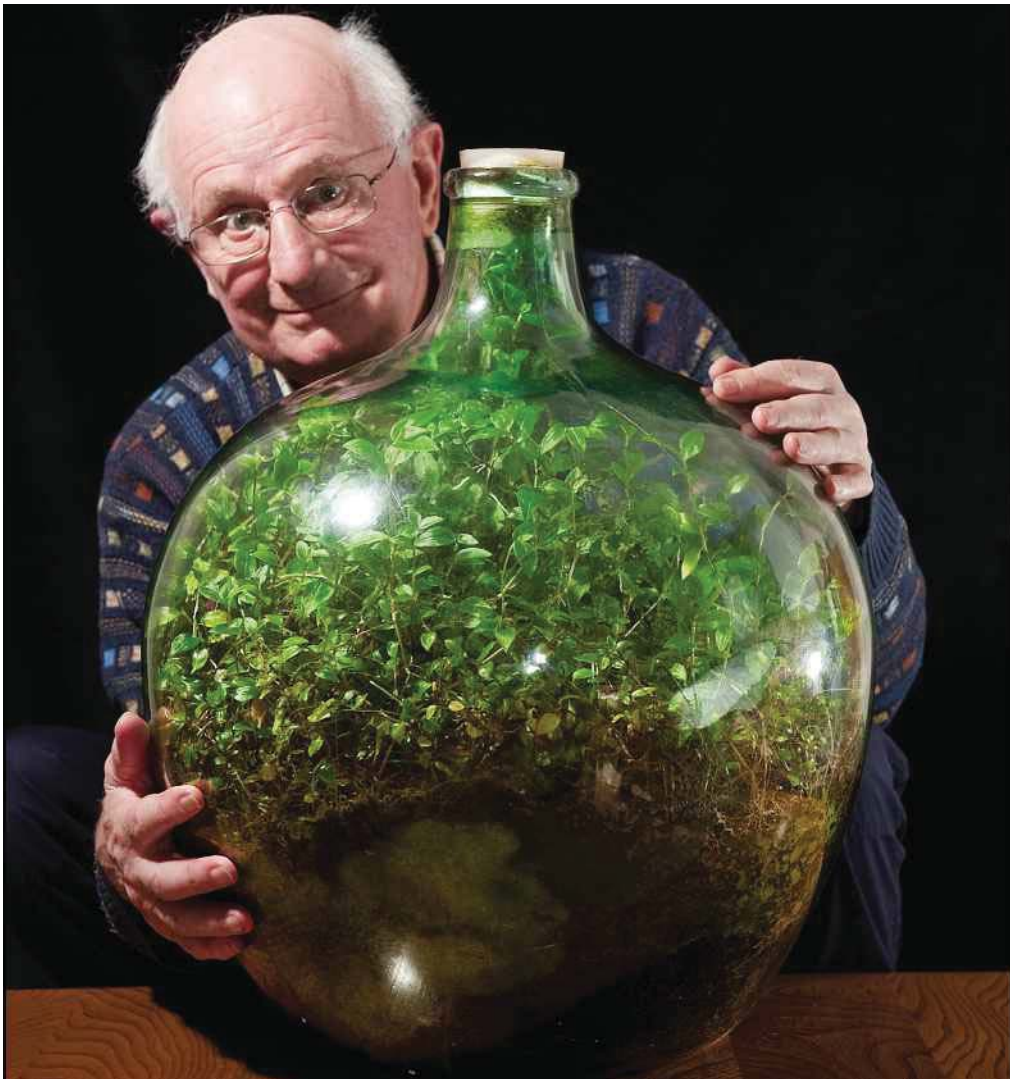
A WORLD OF THEIR OWN

Elderly tradescantia, tortoise emerges after 30 years and Highgate's rare spiders



PHIL YEOMANS / BNPS.CO.UK

A plant grown inside a bottle without air or water is still flourishing after 53 years. David Latimer, 80, planted the tradescantia, or spiderwort, inside a 10-gallon globular bottle in 1960 to test a theory that it could exist in a self-contained environment. He gave it a quarter of a pint of water when he planted it, and another drink in 1972, after which he wedged the bung in tightly and hasn't opened it since. The plant thrived and now fills the bottle, which stands under the stairs in the hallway of his house in Cranleigh, Surrey, 6ft (1.8m) from a window.

"There's no point. I plan to leave it to my children"

It has been there for the last 27 years, ever since Mr Latimer and his wife Gretchen moved from Lancashire when he retired as an electrical engineer. He rotates it occasionally so that it grows evenly. It has survived using photosynthesis despite being cut off from the world, absorbing solar energy from daylight, water from the moisture it creates itself and carbon dioxide and nutrients from the leaves that it drops. "The truth is there is no point, it's just to see how long it lasts," said Mr Latimer. "I plan to leave it to my children." *D.Mail, D.Telegraph, 25 Jan 2013.*

A pet tortoise called Manuela vanished in 1982 after builders working on the Almeida family's house in Rio de Janeiro left the front door open. The family searched the neighbourhood in vain, and gave up hope of ever seeing their pet again. More than 30 years later, in January this year, Leonel Almeida died, and his children cleared out a locked room where he had stored old electrical items. When son Leandro put out a box containing a record player for rubbish collection, a neighbour said, "You're not throwing out the tortoise as well are you?" Leandro looked and saw Manuela. His sister Lenita, who had been given the tortoise as a childhood pet, said: "Everything my father thought he could fix, he picked up and brought home. If he found an old television, he thought he might be able to use a part of it to fix another one in the future, so he just kept accumulating things. We never dared go inside that room. We're all thrilled to have Manuela back. None of us can understand how she survived for 30 years in there – it's just unbelievable." Local vet Jeferson Pires explained that Manuela was a red-footed tortoise, which can go for up to three years without eating. He said she might have survived by nibbling termites from the wooden floor and licking condensation off smooth surfaces. *D.Mirror, D.Mail, D.Telegraph, 26 Jan 2013.*

A rare species of spider has been found in Highgate Cemetery, north London. The orb weaver spider *Meta bourneti*, which measures more than 3cm (1.2in) in diameter, was found in an Egyptian Avenue vault. It preys on insects and slugs with venomous fangs and, though European, has not been recorded in London before.

Up to 100 spiders were found in the vault and may have been thriving there undetected for 150 years. They require complete darkness and the sealed vault was an ideal habitat. *Eve. Standard, Sun, 21 Jan 2013.*

Real-life *Speed*

Man's shopping trip turns into terror ride

Franck Lecerf, 36, set out in his Renault Laguna 3 to visit his local supermarket in Pont-de-Metz, near Amiens in northern France, on 13 February. He was on the A16 duel carriageway in Picardie when the speed dial, which had been specially adapted for disabled drivers, jammed at 60mph (96km/h). Each time he tried to brake, the car accelerated instead of slowing down, eventually hitting 125mph (200km/h). As other cars hooted and swerved from his path, he managed to call the emergency services. Several police cars, realising his only option was to keep going until his petrol ran out, escorted him at breakneck speed along 125 miles (200km) of French coastal motorway, past Calais and Dunkirk, and over the Belgian border. Three toll stations were obliged to raise their barriers as Lecerf careered onwards. His hour-long white-knuckle ride ended when he ran out of petrol and swerved into a ditch in Alveringem.

"My life flashed before me," he told *Le Courrier Picard*. "I just wanted it to stop." He said he had

suffered two epileptic seizures as a result of the ordeal. A Renault technician had sought to advise police on how to solve the problem as they gave chase, but to no avail. Lecerf said it was not his first speed-jamming incident, but that Renault had looked at the car and said that it had fixed the problem. "This time, they've gone too far," he said. His lawyer said he would file a legal complaint over "endangerment of a person's life". *D.Telegraph, Metro, 14 Feb 2013.*

KONSPIRACY KORNER

ROBIN RAMSAY, EDITOR OF LOBSTER, REPORTS FROM THE BUNKER ON...

THE RETURN OF RITUAL SATANIC ABUSE

We might have seen it coming: that amidst the allegations about Jimmy Savile (see **FT295:2**) someone would claim that Savile had been engaged in Satanic abuse. Thus reported the *Daily Express*: "Jimmy Savile beat and raped a 12-year-old girl during a secret satanic ritual in a hospital. The perverted star wore a hooded robe and mask as he abused the terrified victim in a candle-lit basement. He also chanted "Hail Satan" in Latin as other pædophile devil worshippers joined in and assaulted the girl at Stoke Mandeville Hospital in Buckinghamshire." [1]

The allegation was first made in 1995 to a psychotherapist named Valerie Sinason. Sinason told the *Express*: "She recognised him [Savile] because of his distinctive voice and the fact that his blond hair was protruding from the side of the mask."

GETTY IMAGES

In the same article, Sinason claimed that a second woman reported similar events that allegedly took place five years later.

Valerie Sinason is director of the Clinic for Dissociative Studies in London. She believes in the reality of Satanic ritual abuse and told the *Catholic Herald* in 2002 that the ritual murder of children in this country was "Auschwitz in peacetime". [2]

We have been here before. In the late 1980s, following similar events in America, there was a wave of allegations of Satanic abuse of children, and in some cases – those in Rochdale, the Orkneys and Nottingham, for example – the police and social services initially took the claims seriously. But the police concluded that there had been no Satanic rituals: the idea had been planted on the children by gullible, and in many cases Christian, social workers. In Nottingham a joint police–social services inquiry investigated the events there, and their report can now be read online. [3] You don't have to read much of it much to see that its conclusion, that the tales told by the children were inventions, was correct.

In 1994, a three-year Department of Health inquiry by the anthropologist Professor Jean La Fontaine into 84 alleged cases of ritual abuse found no evidence of Satanism in any of them. Despite this, Valerie Sinason was given a grant of £22,000 by the Department of Health to research Satanic abuse. Her study was never published.

In 2011 she spoke to a journalist from the *Observer*:

"Sinason talks of a popular ritual in which a child is stitched inside the belly of a dying animal before being 'reborn to satan'. During other celebrations, 'people eat fæces, menstrual blood, semen, urine. There's cannibalism.' Some groups have doctors performing abortions. 'They give the fœtus to the mother and she's made to kill the baby.'

'And the cannibalism – that's fœtuses?' I clarify. 'Foetuses and bits of bodies.' 'Raw or cooked?' 'The foetuses are raw.'

'Not even a bit of salt and pepper?' I ask. 'Raw. And handed round like communion. On one major festival, the babies are barbecued. I can still remember one survivor saying how easy it is to pull apart the ribs on a baby. But adults are tougher to eat.'" [4]

Sinason is unusual in still speaking like this: many of the other Satanic abuse-hunters have adopted coded language to conceal their true interests. [5] Sinason – and the others – believe Satanic ritual abuse exists because they believe what the 'victims' tell them. Given a different set of clients – those claiming to have been abducted by aliens, for example – would they also believe in the reality of their claims?

1 www.express.co.uk/posts/view/370439/Jimmy-Savile-was- part-of-satanic-ring

2 http://archive.catholicherald.co.uk/article/15th-march- 2002/2/malcolm-johnson-of-the-association-of-child-abuse-

3 www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~dlheb/jetrepor.htm

4 www.guardian.co.uk/society/2011/dec/11/carole-myers- satanic-child-abuse

5 See www.saff.ukhq.co.uk/rans.htm

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MATT PATTINSON

ARCHÆOLOGY

Our archaeological round-up is brought to you by **PAUL DEVEREUX**, Managing Editor of *Time & Mind – The Journal of Archaeology, Consciousness and Culture* (www.bloomsbury.com/timeandmind)

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MORE ON THE MOOR

A rare Bronze Age find on Dartmoor has been announced: within a cist (a small, box-like stone burial structure) found preserved in peat hag on White Horse Hill on the northern moor, archæologists were surprised but delighted to discover an intact human cremation alongside a number of grave goods, including 150 beads (two of them amber). "What was so unusual was the survival of so many organic objects," observed Dartmoor National Park's senior archæologist, Jane Marchand. Acidic soils and some ancient grave robbery usually make finds like this all but impossible.

The grave goods include a delicate bracelet studded with tin beads, a piece of leather-fringed fabric, a woven bag, and the beads, all wrapped up in an animal pelt. Particularly rare items among the goods were ear studs, not found before in the region. Dartmoor archæologists have never had such material available with which to find out about the people who lived on the moor and who left their enigmatic megalithic monuments behind. The results of detailed analysis are yet to come in. *BBC News, 18 Feb 2013.*

ABOVE: The cist on White Horse Hill and (inset) the excavations undertaken by the Devon National Park archæologists.

THE RIGHT WING

A temple has been uncovered in the right wing of the main pyramid in the large archæological complex known as El Paraiso, near Lima, Peru. It is a rectangular structure thought to be about 5,000 years old, which puts it in the same chronological bracket as the Caral complex, the oldest found in Peru (and some say in the Americas) up to now. The temple had a narrow entrance passage and at its centre was a hearth that seems to have been the focus of ritual activity, used for the burning of ceremonial offerings. The remnants of the temple's stone walls indicate they would originally have stood 8ft (2.4m) tall and covered in yellow clay, which contains traces of red pigment. *BBC News, 12 Feb 2013.*

AFP / GETTY IMAGES

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CLASSICAL CORNER

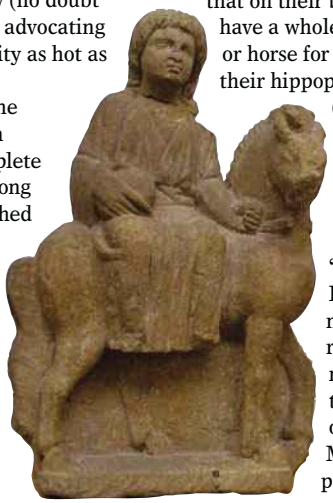
FORTEANA FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD COMPILED BY BARRY BALDWIN

162. I GOTTA HORSE

(Does anyone else remember Prince Monolulu?)

We are supposed to be what we eat. 'Er Indoors says that makes me a chocolate bar or pork pie. I've never knowingly tucked into slices of Black Beauty or scraps of Dobbin. And would probably not order an equine entrée were it on the menu – unless, of course, so hungry I could eat a horse. But why not? After all, horseflesh has long been accepted in France, home of the great white chef. In 2007, Gordon Ramsay (no doubt deliberately) caused a stir by advocating hippophagy, provoking hostility as hot as anything in Hell's Kitchen.

Back in February 1860, at the Langham Hotel, one Algernon Sidney Bicknell served a complete dinner of horsemeat dishes along with an harangue later published as *Hippophagy: The Horse as Food For Man.* He apparently had some success with his gastronomic proselytising. According to Matthew Fort's *Eating Up Italy: Veggies on a Vespa* (2005), hippophagy was common in Yorkshire until the mid-1930s – did James Herriot consider this a stable situation? If served in workers' canteens, did it cause any trouble oop at t' mill?



'Hippophagy' looks like a Greek-derived word. And so it is. But you won't find it in the standard *Lexicon* of Liddell & Scott (on whose completion see Thomas Hardy's delightful poem). And its cognate, 'Hippophagoi' (Horse-Eaters), occurs but once: Ptolemy, *Geography*, bk5 ch9, applied to the Scythians.

Describing these latter's habits, Herodotus (*Histories*, bk1 ch216 & bk4 ch60) says horses were their sacrificial animal of choice, especially to the Sun. He was just as interested in their whores as in their horses, emphasising the universal promiscuity of Scythian women.

The Romans (various sources) also slaughtered horses in honour of their protectress goddess Epona (above) – logical or not? Epona herself was of exotic pedigree, being the product of sexual intercourse between the misogynist Fulvius Stellus and a mare (pseudo-Plutarch, *Parallela Minora*, para312e = Agesilaus, *Italian History*, bk 3 fr1). This hybrid shagging resulted in an exceptionally beautiful daughter – no mare bagatelle. Nowhere is it said that these equine executioners ate this horse flesh. However, after all such animal hecatombs, from Homer on, it was customary for the worshippers to eat the best parts – handy kind of ritual. Indeed, this prompted one pagan reaction against the Christians: cancelling their carnivore rites would deprive the poor of their best chance of a meat meal.

Horsemeat does not appear in Græco-Roman recipes; cf. Andrew Dalby's many books on ancient menus. Athenæus (*Learned Men at Dinner*, bk4. ch144a), though, says that on their birthdays rich Persians would have a whole roasted camel, donkey, ox, or horse for dinner. He does not ridicule their hippophagy. In an earlier mention (bk4 ch131f), he quotes verses from Aristophanes's play *Acharnians* which significantly (?) ridicule the roasted whole oxen but not the horses.

Attila's Huns, often dubbed 'Scythians' by classicising Byzantine historians, had a novel way of cooking on the run, consisting of warming raw meat by placing it between their thighs and the backs of their mounts (Ammianus Marcellinus, *History*, bk31. ch2 para3). I smell contamination probabilities here: did this method work? There is Hunderstandable debate.

Although not specified in Tacitus's *Germania* (a tract much applauded and exploited by the Third Reich – cf. Christopher Krebs, *A Most Dangerous Book: Tacitus' Germania from the Roman Empire to the Third Reich*, London, 2011) – the early Germans were so addicted to horse flesh that in AD 732 Popes Gregory III and Zachary ordered St Boniface to make banning their hippophagy his prime missionary position.

Later on (various sources), the Church granted Icelanders exemption from this interdict if they would accept the new faith. They did – and the exemption was promptly cancelled – Benedictus Benedicat, as we used to intone at school and college meals.

No horsemeat on Apicius's menus. But what would you say to your hamburger being admixed with orts from his stuffed dormice (a uniquely Roman treat, says *Larousse Gastronomique*, but apparently still a delicacy in Slovenia)? – "Remember what the dormouse said/Feed your Head," Jefferson Airplane. Or his stuffed sow's teat? – If it's not one thing, it's the udder.

The question remains: If offered horsemeat, do you say Yeah or Neigh?

PHAROAONIC CSI

Ramesses III, the famous last great pharaoh of ancient Egypt (ruled in 12th century BC; 20th Dynasty) had his throat cut, an Egyptian-European research team report. Using computer tomography (CT) scanning, they discovered a mortal wound nearly 3in (7.6cm) wide in the throat of the pharaoh's mummy. During mummification the slash had been covered by a linen collar, and an Eye of Horus amulet inserted into the deep wound, probably intended for Afterlife healing.

An ancient papyrus states that in 1155 BC members of Ramesses III's harem attempted to murder him as part of a coup to change the line of succession in favour of Pentawere, one of the pharaoh's secondary wives' sons. Whether or not this was the attempt resulting in the slashed throat, the conspirators were rumbled, and punished. To investigate further, the researchers conducted forensic analysis on the mummies of Ramesses III and that of an anonymous young man ("Man E") buried nearby in the Valley of the Kings, known as the "Screaming Mummy" due to its contorted face and gaping mouth. Analysis showed unusual compressed skin folds around his neck as well as an inflated chest, suggestive of strangulation. There were strong DNA links between Ramesses III and this young man, indicating that the Screaming Mummy could well have been Pentawere. *Discovery News, 18 Dec 2012. (Original report in the British Medical Journal, vol.345, issue.7888.)*

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MEDICAL BAG

The baby with a feather coming out of her neck, and a rare sydrome that makes dry land as challenging for its sufferers as a stormy sea or a turbulent flight

Mya Whittington and the feather.

SPROUTING A FEATHER

Aaron and Emma Whittington from Hutchinson, Kansas, noticed that their seven-month-old baby daughter Mya had a swollen neck, so on 8 December they took her to hospital. Doctors told them it was a swollen gland, prescribed antibiotics and sent the family home. Later, a 'pimple' appeared on the swollen area, which then grew to the size of a golf ball. "She looked like Quasimodo," said her father. Mya's grandmother took her back to hospital, where a doctor drained the abscess.

The following evening, the Whittingtons noticed what appeared to be a string emerging from the spot. Mya's pediatrician plucked what turned out to be a 2in (5cm)-long black feather from her neck. It was assumed Mya had swallowed or inhaled the feather, which apparently pierced the inside of her cheek or throat and then, over time, the body forced it out. "She's been pulling on the left side of her face for a couple of months," said her mother – but she suspected it was teething or an ear infection. In her 20 years in the pædiatric department of the hospital, nurse Sandra Mathis had never seen anything like it, though she recalled a child coming in with hairbrush bristles stuck in its tonsils. *CBC News, (Sydney) D.Telegraph, 14 Dec 2012.*

"It comes and goes but I can always hear music"

DOGGED BY TUNES

Susan Root, 63, has had three years of sleepless nights because an endless loop of *How Much is that Doggie in the Window?* plays in her head. (Bob Merrill's novelty song was a 1953 number one for Patti Page in the US and Lita Roza in Britain. Roza – who died in 2008 – so hated the tune she refused ever to sing it again after reluctantly recording it.) Ms Root suffers from a rare form of tinnitus where music and songs play in her head day and night. The school cleaner, of Coggeshall in Essex, also hears *God Save the Queen, Happy Birthday* and *Auld Lang Syne.* "It drives me to breaking point at times," she said. "It comes and goes but I can always hear music, especially *How much is that doggie in the window?,* faintly in the background. When I was young, I used to love the song but now I can't stand it." Doctors say there is nothing they can do to treat her bizarre problem. She has learnt to live with the condition by using calming noises, such as birdsong and whale music, to block out the phantom tunes; but the music is often so loud it drowns out the sound of her husband Graham when he is speaking.

One in 10 people suffer from tinnitus in varying degrees, including Noel Gallagher and Pete Townsend (in their case probably triggered by decibel overload). The condition is defined as "the perception of sound within the human ear in the absence of corresponding external sound." *D.Telegraph, Metro, D.Mirror, Sun, 15 Feb 2013.*

ROCKING AND ROLLING

Nine years after a week-long Mediterranean cruise, Jane Houghton was still feeling seasick. She was suffering from a rare condition called Mal de Débarquement Syndrome (MdDS), which causes sufferers to feel as though they are constantly bobbing about on a rough sea, unbalanced and nauseous. Associated symptoms include fatigue, poor attention and anxiety. The condition is felt to be under-reported in the medical literature, where fewer than 100 cases have been studied. A series of 27 cases reported in 1999 noted that all but one patient were female. The average age was 49 years.

Mrs Houghton, 46, from Warrington, Cheshire, is one of only a handful of people to have the syndrome for more than a few weeks. "It's a similar sensation to walking on a mattress or trampoline," she said. "Everything around me is rocking and rolling. Objects sway about and I'm constantly unbalanced. On a bad day I can barely stand." Doctors believe her brain may have 'locked' itself into thinking it is constantly in motion. Bizarrely, the only time she stops feeling seasick is when she is travelling on a boat, plane or train. She has been on all sorts of journeys and fairground rides to try and trick her brain into 'clicking' back to normal, but without success. "I've even had to stop buying clothes with stripes or busy patterns on them because I can't focus to iron them," she said, adding that she can only shop for an hour at a time, and supermarkets are almost impossible because "everything on the shelf starts coming towards me." *D.Mail, Sun, MX News (Sydney), 30 June 2010.*

Barbara Farrand, 71, from Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, developed MdDS after a three-month world cruise in 2009 to celebrate her Golden Wedding with her husband. "It's like a switch flicked and my brain thinks I'm at sea when I'm on dry land." She falls over frequently and has broken four ribs. She clings to furniture to stay upright, feels ill watching television and can't use a computer. However,

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she is fine as soon as she gets back on a boat. *Sun, 27 Feb 2012.*

Gill Archer, 47, from Wolverhampton, West Midlands, has felt airsick for six years ever since she got off a flight to Florida in 2006 which was so turbulent passengers had to wear seatbelts the entire journey. She suffered long bouts of queasiness, the last at the time of the report having lasted two years. "I have to try very hard to walk around without looking drunk," she said. "It makes my job [as a nurse] very difficult and the long corridors are a nightmare." *Sun, Metro, 24 Feb 2012.*

Michele-Marie Roberts, from Ascot, Berkshire, stepped off a liner in Hawaii in December 2007 after enjoying a break with her husband and two children, but she felt permanently dizzy and was diagnosed with MdDS the following June. "When it first started, I was stumbling about and slurring my words and people often thought I had been drinking," she said. "Once I was in House of Fraser and a shop assistant saw me and said, 'Methinks Madam needs to take more water with it'." By March 2012, at the age of 51, she had lost her job, divorced her husband, and been obliged to give up looking after her autistic sons. "The funny thing was that while we were on the boat, whenever there had been a rough passage, I had been bolt upright while other people were swaying all over the corridors," she said. *D.Telegraph, D.Mail, 23 Mar 2012.*

Claire Farrow, 44, of Kensington, west London, moved into a houseboat in Chelsea with her husband and two children for a few days while the family house was being renovated. When a water taxi raced past and shook the boat violently, she developed MdDS, from which she was still suffering two years later. She experiences frequent nausea and has to hold onto a wall while walking down a street. *D.Telegraph, D.Express, 31 May 2012.*

A–Z ALIEN ZOO

KARL SHUKER presents his regular round-up from the crypto-zoological garden

ROMAN DRAGON

In 1696, Dutch civil engineer Cornelius Meyer published an engraving that depicted in detail the skeleton of an alleged dragon obtained near Rome. The skeleton itself has long vanished, but from the engraving some cryptozoologists speculated it might depict the skeleton of a modern-day pterodactyl. If correct, this would be an astonishing discovery, confirming that at least one lineage of these famous prehistoric flying reptiles had survived to the present day.

However, in January 2013, biologists Phil Senter and Pondanesa D Wilkins from North Carolina's Fayetteville State University revealed that the skeleton was a skilfully constructed composite creation, i.e. a gaff. They identified the very disparate nature of the skeleton's various components: the skull was a domestic dog's; the lower jaw was from a second, smaller domestic dog; a bear's forelimb had been used as the dragon's hind limb; the ribs were from a large fish; the tail was a sculpted fake; and the wings were also manufactured fakes. Portions of skin had been adroitly attached to hide the junctions between these varied body parts. Accordingly, the pterodactyls have been duly jettisoned back into 64 million years or more of extinction, with only Meyer's engraving remaining as silent testimony of what can result when humanity's unbounded imagination and unbridled ingenuity join forces not only to delight but also to deceive. *http://palaeo-electronica.org/content/pdfs/346.pdf*

WEIRD AMONG THE WEEDS

Just because a species has yet to be formally named and described by science doesn't mean that it is invisible. On the contrary – in the case of the hairy octopus of Indonesia's Lembeh diving resort in north Sulawesi (Celebes), it is a veritable online megastar! During the past year or so, a number of eye-catching videos and photographs have appeared on several websites, portraying a small species of octopus (body size 1.5cm–5cm/0.6in–2in, arm length 3cm–10cm/1.2in–4in) that varies in colour between specimens from brown or red to white or cream, and is covered in an extraordinary profusion of hair-like skin flaps or extrusions that superficially resemble strands of seaweed. The smaller the specimen, the more flaps it often bears, and when present among genuine clumps of seaweed it is virtually invisible, so effective is its remarkable camouflage.

While it remains undescribed by science, divers frequently encounter this fascinating species, though in terms of specimen numbers it seems to be rare. Indeed, a page devoted to it on the official website of the Lembeh Resort includes an impressively lengthy list of dive sites where it has been seen, and it has been reported at all times of the year. A close-up video of one specimen shows its 'pseudo-seaweed' skin extrusions in great detail, and they are truly astonishing in their verisimilitude. Let us hope, therefore, that the hairy octopus will soon receive some greatly deserved formal attention and an official name from zoologists after having been viewed at Lembeh for several years, thereby granting this most intriguing little creature some long-overdue scientific respectability. *http://www.lembehresort.com/hairy_octopus_octopus_sp_undescribed__c113.html accessed 1 Mar 2013; http://vimeo.com/54589020 30 Nov 2012; http://nadlembehresort.wordpress.com/2012/11/26/johan-marnes-and-indra-shoot-their-first-hairy-octopus/ 26 Nov 2012.*

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NECROLOG

This month, we bid farewell to Troggs frontman turned UFO aficionado, the moral philosopher of psychiatry and psychotherapy, and a longhaired fruitarian Old Harrovian

HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

REG PRESLEY

Bricklayer Reginald Ball was lead singer with The Troggs (initially called The Trodlodytes), a pop group that had seven huge hits within 18 months in 1966–67, notably *Wild Thing*. The Troggs influenced Iggy Pop and the Ramones, and were hailed by the American journalist Lester Bangs as the godfathers of punk rock. (It was music publicist Keith Altham who changed Reg's surname to Presley.) Reg's slow descent from celebrity was interrupted in 1994 when his 1967 hit *Love Is All Around* was covered by the Scottish group Wet Wet Wet and used on the soundtrack of the film *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. It reached No 1 and remained there for 15 weeks.

The substantial royalties from this enabled Presley to fund his research into UFOs, crop circles, ancient sites and alchemy. His interest in the paranormal could be dated to 1 June 1974. "It was lunchtime," he recalled. "I saw a news bulletin about a fire in Flixborough. It described how the blaze was melting windows half a mile away. I tell my wife about it. Six o'clock, I turn on the news again, and it says the explosion only happened at eight minutes to five. How did I see a report about a disaster four hours before it happened? Could the broadcast signal have been affected by gravity?"

Presley would regularly visit crop circles with his friend Busty Taylor, and the pair gave lectures on the subject in the UK, Germany, and the US. Presley ascribed great significance to the fact that many glyphs appeared in a triangle between Warminster, Wantage and Winchester. "Look at the first few letters of each place," he told an interviewer. "War, Want, Win. Is that a message, or what?" Though his ideas were outlandish, his routine life in Andover – which he shared with Brenda, his wife of 49 years – was utterly normal. He was a kindly, approachable man. In 1994 he claimed to have obtained footage of a metallic disc seen hovering over crops, which he believed was controlled by "one of the little fellers, the ones with the big cow eyes, which in UFO circles we call the greys. I've got a sneaking feeling that they are engineered by aliens who can see the future; if they know a woman is going to lose a baby they take it and they convert it. They put in a bit of extra brain. Maybe no vocal. But they can mind-read you." Another time, he said: "These beings may be 20 million years in advance of us. What kind of technology must they have?" He often organised nocturnal expeditions round Andover, scouring the landscape with binoculars, hoping to contact extraterrestrials. In 2002 he outlined his beliefs in *Wild Things They Don't Tell Us*.

Presley became fascinated by the possible benefits of ingesting powdered gold, a substance that belongs to a family known as ORMEs (orbitally rearranged monatomic elements), and for which extraordinary claims are made on alchemical websites. He thought that this wonderful substance could have been "fed by the Egyptians to the Pharaohs. I tried to manufacture it myself. You need the temperature of the Sun to make it, so I went down to the iron foundry in Andover. You zap the gold at the temperature of the Sun. Then you look in the crucible and there is only white dust left." He used to place a little of the powder under his tongue every day, believing it might prolong his life indefinitely. Sadly, he was disappointed.

Reginald Maurice Ball, aka Reg Presley, singer and mystic, born Andover, Hants 12 June 1941; died Andover 4 Feb 2013, aged 71.

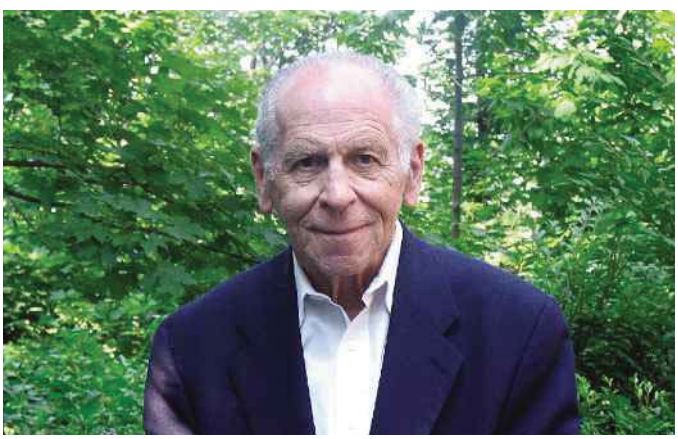
THOMAS SZASZ

Dr Szasz, Professor of Psychiatry at the State University of New York in Syracuse, was regarded by many as the leading moral philosopher of psychiatry and psychotherapy, while others saw him as a dangerous influence, advocating neglect of some of society's most helpless members. However, he was deeply concerned with human suffering; his point was simply that suffering was not necessarily a medical problem, did not imply lack of responsibility and should not be treated forcibly. He wrote more than 30 books, the most famous being *The Myth of Mental Illness* (1961). He argued that the concept of mental illness was little more than a metaphor without any pathological referent; it was not based on evidence of disease or other organic malfunction. The mind is not a bodily organ and therefore cannot be sick; it is only a name for a category of events that we call mental. In *The Manufacture of Madness* (1970), he compared the 20th century tendency to define aberrant behaviour as mental illness to the 17th century practice of accusing nonconformists of witchcraft.

Szasz was a critic of the influence of modern medicine on society, which he considered to be the secularisation of religion's hold on humankind. He pointed out that, *pharmakos*, the Greek root of pharmacology, originally meant 'scapegoat'. In *The Second Sin* (1973), he wrote: "If you talk to God, you are praying; if God talks to you, you have schizophrenia. If the dead talk to you, you are a spiritualist; if you talk to the dead, you are a schizophrenic." In the same work, he wrote: "The Nazis spoke of having a 'Jewish problem'. We now speak of having a drug-abuse problem. Actually, 'Jewish problem' was the name the Germans gave to their persecution of the Jews; 'drug-abuse problem' is the name we give to the persecution of people who use certain drugs." He saw the psychiatrist who committed people to mental hospitals against their will as a jailer, not a doctor. Szasz's work was often misinterpreted and linked with RD Laing and the antipsychiatry movement, which he reviled (among his recent books was *Antipsychiatry: Quackery Squared*).

Szasz believed that suicide, the practice of medicine, the use and sale of drugs and sexual relations should be private, contractual and outside of state jurisdiction. He argued that Freud's psychoanalysis was not a new science; it was only a conversation between two people, which Freud fraudulently misrepresented as treatment – although he revered the possibility Freud had opened up, of searching conversation between consenting adults. In effect, Freud founded a cartel that for years maintained a monopoly over psychoanalysis; he treated the subject as if it were a patented invention, like the formula for Coca Cola.

Thomas Stephen Szasz, psychiatrist, born Budapest 15 April 1920; died New York State 8 Sept 2012, aged 92.



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JUNGLEYES LOVE

This odd chap was born Charles Bissell-Thomas, but changed his name while still a teenager to Charlight Uiang, then Soma Love, then (by deed poll) to Jungleyes Cism Love, more recently calling himself Jarl Love. He went to Harrow School, then got himself a place at Latymer School in Hammersmith, and never cut his hair again. From his mid-20s he no longer brushed or combed it; he used its matted mass as a cushion while waiting at bus stops.

After graduating in neurobiology at Sussex University, he spent several years with a *dukun* (witch doctor) in Indonesia called Waktu Lamak ('Fat Time'). Back in the UK, he also learned the tradition of rune-lore, allegedly handed down by a succession of female practitioners. Jungle (as everyone called him) regularly took fly agaric (*Amanita muscaria*) as used in the Siberian shamanic tradition. For the last 30 years of his life he was a fruitarian and became one of the few European sufferers from beriberi, his diet being deficient in vitamin B. He ran a tiny shop called World Tree Mend Us near Kew Gardens in London, where he sold runic jewellery, dinosaur eggs and coprolites (fossilised excrement). He refused to be photographed, claiming that the camera would steal his soul.

A notable commission in the early 1990s was from a customer who wanted him to design a pendulum that would enable the buyer to win on the horses, in order to buy a flat with the proceeds. When first employed, the silver pendulum won the owner £800, but on its second attempt it failed to swing with pertinence and was returned with instructions to replace silver with gold. This Jungle did, also adding part of a prehistoric pony's kneecap. The pendulum was ready for the following year's Cheltenham Gold Cup, when the owner formed two circles of runners' names from the race card. The first circle produced no movement in the pendulum, but when the second did – and the owner placed his initial £800 winnings on the horse indicated – he won £33,000.

Charles Gigaut Bissell-Thomas, aka Jungleyes Love, rune master, born Jersey 13 Mar 1956; died 2 Feb 2013, aged 56.

STRANGE DEATHS

UNUSUAL WAYS OF SHUFFLING OFF THIS MORTAL COIL

A woman was tortured and burned alive in Papua New Guinea on 6 February after being accused of using sorcery to kill a six-year-old boy who died in hospital the day before. The 20-year-old woman, who had an eight-month-old daughter, was named as Kepari Leniata (or Lanieta) from Enga Province. She was stripped, tied up, tortured with a branding iron, doused in petrol and then thrown onto a fire by the boy's relatives in front of hundreds of people, including children, in the Western Highlands provincial capital of Mount Hagen. Police and firefighters, unable to intervene, were outnumbered by the crowd and chased away. Grisly pictures were published on the front pages of the country's biggest circulating newspapers, the *National* and *Post-Courier*. A week later, two elderly women were accused of killing an eight-year-old girl and were about to be burnt alive in Mount Hagen when they were rescued by police.

In rural Papua New Guinea, witchcraft is often blamed for unexplained misfortunes. Sorcery has traditionally been countered by sorcery, but responses to sorcery allegations have become increasingly violent in recent years. In other recent sorcery-related killings, police arrested 29 people in July 2012 accused of being part of a cannibal cult in Papua New Guinea's jungle interior and charged them with the murders of seven suspected witch doctors [**FT292:9**]. *[AP] BBC News, 7 Feb; Post-Courier, The National (Port Moresby, PNG), 8 Feb; D.Telegraph, 8+15 Feb 2013.*

A New York man died in a bizarre case of delayed drowning – succumbing several hours after pulling himself from the water when he fell off a boat. Tommy Mollo, 60, died in hospital hours after he returned home. The cause of death was secondary drowning due to water in his lungs. Doctors conceded that while water could be inhaled while a person still had the strength to reach dry land, it was unlikely. "If you make it to the hospital alive, it's very unusual to die from drowning," said Larry Baraff, from the Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center. *MX News (Sydney), 17 May 2012/*

Yao Defen, 39 (or 40), the world's tallest woman, died on 13 November 2012 in the house she shared with her mother in Shitang (or Zhucheng) village, eastern China. The Chinese media claimed she was 2.36m (7ft 9.1in) tall, while Guinness World Records said she was a mere 2.33m (7ft 7.3in). She weighed more than 420lb (190kg) and had size 26 feet. A German shoemaker, Georg Wessels, flew to China to present her with three pairs of specially made shoes for free in 2006. She developed gigantism because of a tumour on her pituitary gland and had topped 6ft 6in (1.98m) by the time she was 15. The tumour, discovered after she fainted while playing basketball, was removed in 2006. However, she continued to have other health problems, such as heart disease and high blood pressure. In her youth, she had made a living travelling with her father as a curiosity in a circus. Despite coming from a poor family, she declined government handouts. *telegraph.co.uk, 5 Dec; Canberra Times, 6 Dec 2012.*

Natasha Harris, a 30-year-old mother of eight from Invercargill, New Zealand, died from her coke habit – 10 litres (17.6 pints) of Coca-Cola a day, 24,000 litres (5,280 gallons) over eight years. This was more than twice the 400mg recommended safe limit of caffeine and 11 times more than the approved sugar intake. If she ran out of the brown liquid, she suffered withdrawal symptoms and mood swings. Several of her teeth rotted and had to be removed, and at least one of her children was born without tooth enamel. She had been unwell for up to a year before her death in February 2010, vomiting every morning and suffering from a racing heartbeat. The coroner found she died of cardiac arrhythmia and hypokalemia (potassium deficiency) caused by the effects of caffeine, as well as poor nutrition. *MX News (Sydney), D.Mirror, Metro, 13 Feb 2013.*

After enduring beatings for seven months, Elizabeth Rudavsky, 27, plunged a butcher's knife into the chest of her abusive husband, Angelo Heddington, in 2003. It was only then that she discovered her husband was really a woman wearing a false penis. She had married the 30-year-old after a four-month romance. Heddington, who was born Angela, claimed a previous girlfriend had burned 'his' genitals and insisted on sex with the lights out. Rudavsky maintained she loved her husband, who threatened her with guns and beat her with a metal pipe. It was later revealed that Heddington, from Chatham in Ontario, Canada, had pretended to be male since the age of 14 and had a history of abusive relationships in a male persona. *Metro, 7 Dec 2012.*

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FLYINGSAUCERY

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TEN YEARS OF SAUCERY

Welcome to the 10th anniversary edition of Flying Saucery. Since April 2003 we have brought you our regular round-up of news and gossip from the bizarre world of ufology. During that time we have penned a total of 92 columns and a number of special features on classic cases such as the alien autopsy film (**FT210:30-31**). Our personal highlights include our discovery of the British government's secret Condign report (**FT211:4-6**) and the release of the MoD's entire UFO archive. These scoops preceded the decision in 2009 by the Ministry to close their UFO unit that curtailed Nick Pope's long and lucrative career as its most ubiquitous desk jockey (**FT258:28**). It's been a long, strange trip.

During the noughties, UFO fads and fashions from alien abductions to exopolitics have come and gone. We have watched with amusement as attempts have been made to breathe life back into legends such as Rendlesham, Berwyn and the great grand-daddy of them all, Roswell. Along the way we noted the passing of some of ufology's key movers and shakers including John Mack, Graham Birdsall and Gordon Creighton. And as UFO communities decamped to the web, the UFO magazines that once acted as the subject's talking shops have faded away, replaced by badly researched web sites and the often inane information-lite chatter on Facebook.

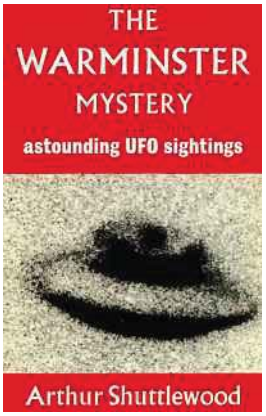
So what have we learned from our decade as collectors and curators of ufological legend? Well, despite all the claims about 'the death of ufology' (see **FT296:28**), the millions who are entertained almost nightly by the stream of satellite UFO shows, such as National Geographic's *Chasing UFOs*, prove the *idea* of UFOs and alien visitations is more alive than ever. The popularity of these shows, despite the dearth of evidential new sightings, has provided a nostalgia-fest for the UFO industry. In the UK, the last significant flap, in 2007-8, was created by the media obsession with UFOs that followed the release of the MoD's files and one tabloid's determination to turn the craze for releasing 'Sky Lanterns' into alien invasion fleets that menaced our towns and windfarms (see **FT239:30**). The lack of good quality recent reports has obliged the leaders of the UFO industry to delve deep into the subject's back catalogue in search of that elusive 'evidence' for extraterrestrial visitations. Why is this the case? Why, if there is a genuine, physical UFO phenomenon, do we not know more about it after 60 years of study? Well actually we *do* know quite a bit about the UFO phenomenon, but the truth is unpalatable and doesn't make for exciting TV. We know, for instance, that the vast majority of UFO sightings are misperceptions of natural phenomena or man-made objects, from balloons to space junk. We also know that even the most seemingly complex cases such as the Berwyn Mountain UFO 'crash' (see **FT252:30-35**) are the result of the most amazing cosmic coincidences, as February's Russian meteorite and asteroid close-shave (see p7 & pp57-58) have demonstrated. We also know that cases dear to ufology's heart, such as the Trindade Island photograph (**FT180:22**), have crumbled and that pranks and hoaxes are far more prevalent than was once believed. The mysteries of perception, combined with the desire to believe in 'something' from 'somewhere', are perhaps the fundamentals of the UFO myth since 1947.

If myth and misperception do not lie at the root of the mystery then where is the photographic evidence for these phantoms of the skies? From the 1950s until the 1970s, photos of UFOs were commonplace. Most of the iconic ones, especially those from the UK, have long been discredited as hoaxes. For instance the cover image for skywatchers' bible *The Warminster Mystery* (1965) was Gordon Faulkner's 'classic' UFO, snapped while hovering over the town. It was, in fact, a classic button on a string! You get the picture?

LEFT AND BELOW: Ufology then and now: from Warminster skywatches to National Geographic's *Chasing UFOs*.

Well, we don't – even if, by rights, we should. In the current digital age, when everyone carries some form of device capable of taking a reasonable photo, images of UFOs are few and far between. The Internet is full of hoaxed, photo-shopped and SFX whizz-bang UFOs – but where are the shots taken by ordinary witnesses going about their daily business?

Nevertheless, we remain wary of throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Despite our deep-seated doubts and the lack of what we regard as conclusive evidence for the physical reality of UFOs, people continue to report strange things in the sky and encounters with otherworldly intelligences. The simple fact is that humans have *always* experienced anomalies for which there is no simple explanation. But experience does not imply that solid UFOs or extraterrestrials (or any other fortean phenomena, for that matter) actually exist – only that ordinary people continue to have extraordinary experiences. The problems arise when experience is interpreted through belief, when lights in the sky become structured craft of unknown origin, or when meteors and earthquakes create 'UFO crashes' in the Internet gossip mills.



Perhaps *Magonia's* indefatigable John Rimmer was right when he said that ufology had "deteriorated into an endless scrutiny of issues that that were once considered settled." His solution was to "make ufology history." In our view, that's what it largely is today: a modern myth that should one day take its rightful place in the social history of our demon-haunted world.

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UFO CASEBOOK

JENNY RANDLES OPENS HER CASE FILES AND TURNS TO THE NUMBER 300...

THREE HUNDRED UFOs

For this special 300th edition of *FT* I have taken another look at cases bearing that number in 'UFO catalogues'. This random sampling of our 'high end' sightings preserved down the years by groups and researchers forms a snapshot of the UFO phenomenon to place in context with 2013.

None are 'world famous' cases, but they are all interesting in their own way. More importantly, they illustrate that outside the 'big ones' that get the *X-Factor* treatment in books and TV programmes, the real UFO evidence consists of tens of thousands of sightings just like these scattered liberally around the world and across the decades.

BLUE BOOK UNKNOWNS

Project Blue Book was the US Air Force project that collated UFO sightings up to 1969. Brad Sparks has compiled those cases deemed unknown and Jan Aldrich has catalogued all 1,600. Number 300 occurred on 18 April 1950 near Memphis, Texas.

At 9am, Civil Aviation observers in two locations 50 miles [80km] apart tracked an unknown object and watched it remain stationary for about three hours. A test pilot with Northrop Engineering was advised to take off in an F-61 carrying two observers as ground control vectored them onto the UFO. At 12.20 they spotted the target when at 20,000ft [6,700m] – although the "silver translucent sphere" was still much higher than them. They flew for 10 minutes at over 200mph [320km/h] but – whilst they seemed to close the gap – could not reach the object before losing it.

At closest approach they described it as having prominent bumps on the top and bottom and a vertical streak, and noted that it was not travelling at speed – as evidenced by staying virtually in the same area of sky for several hours. A B–36 military aircraft was also sent from Fort Worth and flew at 46,000ft [14,000m] over the location without seeing the UFO. Eventually, the F-61 had to abandon the pursuit as its crew were running low on oxygen.

Air Traffic Control in Amarillo confirmed that they had no matching craft and rejected the Northrop crew's impression of seeing a weather balloon because wind speeds at that height were so great that no balloon could have remained static for so long.

Looking back, we note that the 1950s saw many similar mid-air encounters. Indeed, this case compares with the fly-by encounter over Lakenheath, East Anglia, in August 1956. The RAF Venom crew told me 40 years later that they suspected they had flown past a slowly drifting weather balloon. My view is that early jet fighters being sent to intercept unidentified targets created a number of misperceptions that familiarity with the skies and modern technology have since largely eliminated.

Witnesses said the UFO was shaped like a "skate fish"

Moreover, in the 1950s there was little awareness that bright planets such as Venus can be seen in daylight, providing another source of IFOs; aircrew would sometimes try to fly towards impossibly distant 'UFOs', not realising that you can never reach a 'star' however hard you try.

BUFORA VEHICLE INTERFERENCE REPORT

A catalogue compiled by Geoff Falla and Tony Pace for BUFORA (British UFO Research Association) usefully tabulates cases where cars and aircraft suffer electrical interference when in close proximity with a UFO (handily available from BUFORA as a DVD). Case no 300 occurred on 8 April 1968 at Timra near Sundsvall in Sweden.

Margaretha Svenson was driving towards Harnosand when her car radio suddenly stopped working. As she puzzled over the malfunction, a blinding light approached her and appeared to 'sit' on the bonnet of the vehicle. It remained there for several minutes before disappearing. The witness chanced to have one bare arm outside the car window during the incident and, the next day, discovered that it had a burn mark, though she suffered no pain. After being examined by a doctor no further symptoms developed and the burn gradually faded.

This is a good example of a UAP – an unidentified atmospheric phenomenon – in this case likely to have similarities with floating plasma discharges such as ball lightning. Also, it reveals how many sightings of this type are misreported as UFOs, but can add knowledge to the quest by physicists to understand such scientific anomalies. Indeed, the more extreme examples are the ones most likely to be reported to ufologists and missed entirely by interested meteorologists.

BRITISH 1977 CASE CATALOGUES

This was the biggest year for UFO sightings during the modern era. Both NUFON (Northern UFO Network) and BUFORA recorded hundreds of sightings, so I include here the 300th reported case for each organisation.

NUFON case 77-300 happened in June at Coldstream in Scotland and was investigated by Alan Price. Two youths alleged that as they played together on a field a dull white oval-shaped craft appeared. It had a dome on top and a green light underneath, as well as large windows and a blue light above the dome. Even more curious was the claim that letters – including an 'X' – were written on the edge and a small being was visible through the windows. Suffice to say that this is one of those cases where you have little to go on but the testimony of two possibly imaginative boys!

BUFORA's 300th case in 1977 could not provide a greater contrast. Here there were over 25 witnesses, 18 of them police officers, scattered across the lakes in Cumbria just after midnight on 28 August. The provenance of this sighting is impeccable, as BUFORA investigator R Hall established. What these witnesses saw proved another question.

At nine different locations, from Bassenthwaite through the Windermere region to the sea north of Morecambe Bay, between 00.10 and 00.30 hours, two bright 'car headlights' with another light behind passed slowly over the dark mountainous Lake District, heading from north to south. Some witnesses described it as having a kite or "skate fish" shape. Some spoke of silence, others of a faint purring noise or a buzzing sound. The best view of all came at Silverdale, where a husband and wife watched the object in close-up through binoculars and described it as "like looking up into a giant ocean-going catamaran with twin hulls".

At the time, the case appeared mysterious; but seen from the present we can compare it to plethora of similar reports from around the UK from the late 1970s and early 1980s of what came to be called 'manta ray' UFOS. When an almost identical sighting was made in the West Country in 1993, again by late-night percipients such as police and fishermen, witnesses even used the exact same description as the Silverdale witnesses of a twin-hulled catamaran. In the light of many subsequent cases, we might now look back and suspect that a military airship or early prototype powered drone was on test and caused these slow-moving objects – an idea that could not be gleaned from a single incident like BUFORA case 300 when it started the flood of subsequent sightings.

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BLASTS FROM THE PAST

FORTEAN TIMES BRINGS YOU THE NEWS THAT TIME FORGOT

44 MRS MANN AND HER WINGED WONDERS

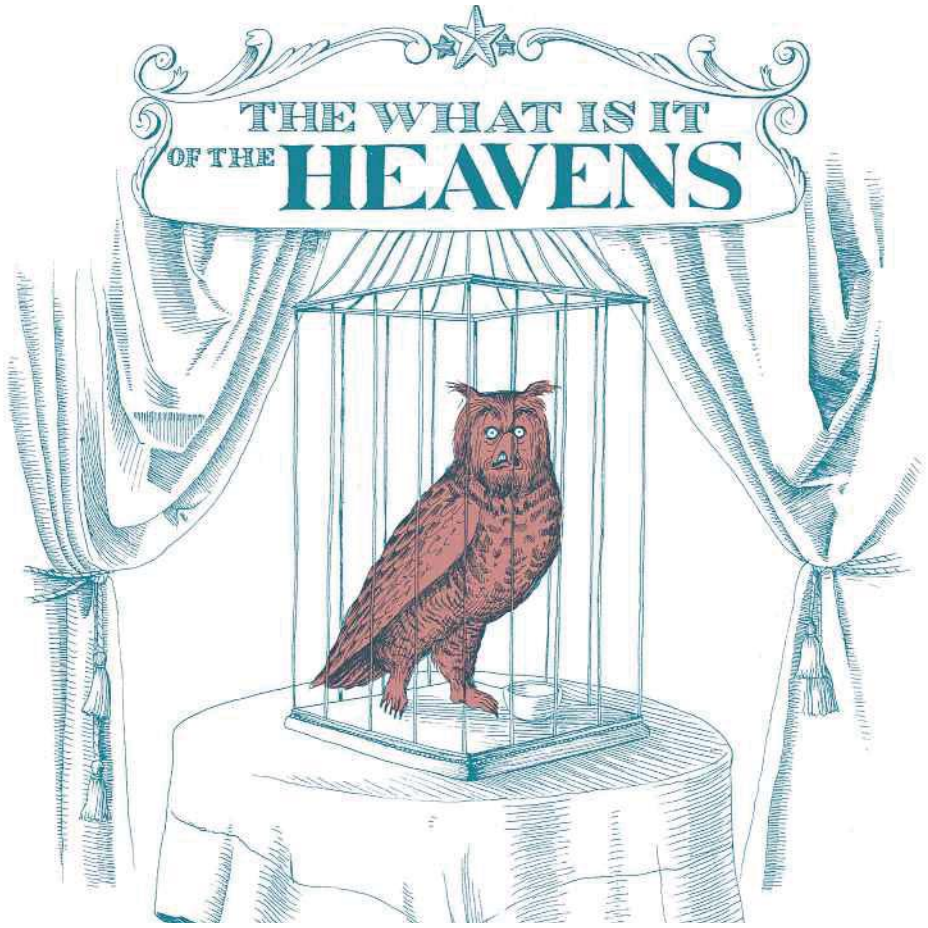
THEO PAIJMANS considers an Indiana woman's curious connections with a number of owl-like oddities

One evening in September 1893, two women, Mrs Caspar Mann and Mrs Joseph Groswick, were on their way home, driving a buggy in the sunset near the town of Greensburg, Indiana. As they were passing along a road south of the Magnus quarry they heard a noise sounding like a cross between a bellow and a shriek. Startled by the strange sound, they tried to locate where it came from, but could not. Paying little attention to it, they continued on their journey. Approaching a lonely spot where large forest trees stood on either side of the road and the ground was covered by undergrowth, they heard the unsettling sound again. But now it seemed to emanate from the branches of a large tree ahead of them. As they approached the tree, the branches were rustled as if by some unseen disturbance. The ordeal the two ladies then underwent is best described by the newspaper that published their account:

"[T]he lonely and helpless women were horrified to see a horrible-looking monster descending from the tree coon-fashion. Their horse seemed paralysed with fear, and for a moment refused to answer the frantic effort of the driver to force him ahead. As the animal reached the ground it gave a terrific snort and roar and started for the buggy. One of the occupants seized the whip and prepared for the attack. Recovering his sense of locomotion the horse started at a brisk gait down the road. Then the race for life began…" [1]

Within minutes, the monster had overtaken the buggy and was trying to climb on the box in the rear. And a terrible monster it was:

"The animal, they say, was about seven feet [2.1m] long. Its head was long, and ended in a beak like an eagle's; its body was round, like that of an alligator, covered with scales and ornamented with a pair of wings, which would probably measure six feet [1.8m] from tip to tip. It had four legs, and its feet were cloven and covered with a hoof. The smell of its breath and body was terrible, and pervaded the atmosphere for some time…" [2]



CAPUCINE DESLOUIS

"The What Is It Of The Heavens. One of the wonderful winged creatures of the air. Wings four feet from tip to tip. The head of an ape on the body of a bird with human ears and beard"

Hurtling the buggy along the road while fending off this nightmare vision, the women thought all was over for them when they heard the bark of a dog from a nearby farm they were fast approaching. To their relief, two men stepped out in the road a short distance in front of them. As the men, and more dogs, approached, the monster roared a last cry that, according to the account, could be heard for a quarter of a mile. It whirled to one side, ambled through the bushes and disappeared. Since the men were unarmed, they declined to follow the creature. The women were taken to the farmstead were they were given the opportunity to recover from their ordeal. The rear of the buggy was covered in deep cuts and scratches – unmistakeable evidence, so it seemed, that something very unusual had assaulted the carriage.

Abbreviated accounts of the incident were published nationwide in American newspapers over the following weeks, and even in Canada. [3] The headlines show something of the spectrum of editorial approach. Newspapers from Alabama, Illinois and Indiana suggested that the creature must have escaped from "a Chinese Bazaar" at the World's Fair. [4] Other Indiana newspapers described

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the creature as a generic "varmint",[5] while a Louisiana paper tagged the tale as "the biggest snake-story" [6], clearly expressing its opinion as to the improbability of the tale by referring to the yearly returning crop of weird and wonderful yarns of immense snakes and other von Munchausen-like serpents. Newspapers from New York and Wisconsin called the creature a "Tree-climbing Boojum". [7] Another newspaper from New York pooh-poohed the whole affair in its headline "What Women Can See In The Dark", [8] while a Kansas newspaper intriguingly headed its account with "The Gorilla Again". [9]

How should we approach this unlikely tale? As usual, I found no follow-up and no further mention of the incident. Another element that points in the direction of a canard is that the initial account appeared in a publication far away from the site of the incident – namely, a newspaper in Cincinnati, Ohio. It was sent to that newspaper as a 'special dispatch' and only after this publication did it find its way back to the Indiana newspapers and other dailies across America.

Experience has taught me that this was a standard modus operandi of planting a hoax tale; I have several examples where, when an account actually reaches the town, locale or city where it was said to have occurred, local newspapers have no knowledge of the incident and condemn it as a tall tale. Then there is the motif of the limestone quarry – one of which Indiana was famous for – and the weird winged creature materialising in its vicinity, almost suggesting that this tale derives in part from the older hoax of the living pterodactyl embedded in a block of stone at Culmont, as published in the *Illustrated London News* on 9 February 1856. The description of that creature also specified that it had four legs.

What I did find, however – and what opens up yet another avenue in appreciating this unlikely tale – were some very intriguing allusions in a few Indiana newspapers, also published in September, but in 1886, seven years earlier. The accounts involve one of the two women involved in the Magnus Quarry incident, Mrs Mann – and, again, they feature a winged oddity.

"At the residence of Mr WC Mann, No 126 Harrison Street, is to be seen one of the greatest natural curiosities ever known in this region. It is a strange creature of the air that a few evenings ago flew into a window of the paint shop of LB Johns carriage works and was captured by Mr Mann. He was at first afraid to tackle it, but finally turned a box over it and took it home…"

There, Mann placed the creature in a large cage and began to receive hundreds of visitors who wanted to see the strange bird with their own eyes.

"At first glance it looks like an owl, but this resemblance is only true of its body and its great outspreading wings stretching four feet from tip to tip. On his owl-like body is the head and face of an ape. The face with its bulging human eyes is surrounded by a fringe of gray beard tipped with black. The ears are exactly like those of a human being except that they are almost entirely concealed by the growth of fine gray hair that covers the cheeks and forehead. When sitting the creature moves its head and neck with all the motions of a monkey. It has a large parrot-like bill which it uses in climbing. When disturbed it shrieks and cries like a child. Mrs Mann feeds it on meat and milk, after a meal of which it will nestle down in her arms and be rocked to sleep. Mr Mann is always willing to exhibit the strange creature, for which he has been offered a large sum of money, and crowds of people call to look at it every day." [10]

Noticing that there was an enormous public demand in seeing that strange creature, and being enterprising people, the Manns decided to exhibit the bird in a tent at the fair: "A banner with the following inscription will be in front of the tent in which the astonishing freak of nature will appear: The What Is It Of The Heavens. One of the wonderful winged creatures of the air. Wings four feet from tip to tip. The head of an ape on the body of a bird with human ears and beard. A living creature eating and flying about. No stuffed mummy but the greatest natural curiosity ever seen. This flying monster captured alive at Fort Wayne, in September, 1886." [11]

A newspaper remarked that Mann "is making a nice thing out of it."[12] The Manns decided to take their wonder on the road for a tour. A newspaper from South Bend, Indiana, noted: "He came near trading it for a bicycle; then was offered $100 for it; then $500, an offer open at any time, but he thinks if it is worth $500 to any one it is also worth that much to him. He took $169 from Fort Wayne people who called to see it during the fair there, and did well here. He will be at Indianapolis this week at the state fair." [13]

Sightings of owl-like oddities with apelike faces were published more than once in the American newspapers, such as one in 1887 where a startled eyewitness described the creature as follows: "He thinks it belongs to the owl family… His face looked like a monkey's…" [14]

Another account from 1893 reads: "Something came swooping down from the pines… The head was much like that of an owl… The face was that of an ape or a monkey…"[15] These dates closely follow the second incident involving Mrs Mann, and the 1887 account was also published in an Indiana newspaper. It is well to remember that 19th century American newspapers were full of tall tales, hoaxes and accounts of anomalous encounters. [16]

Yet one evening in September, seven years after she and her husband are reported as displaying their "freak of nature" for paying viewers, the same Mrs Mann is headed home, riding a buggy when another winged wonder attacks her and her companion. The story is published in a newspaper far away from the incident, even in another state. Was this a failed attempt at creating a buzz of publicity for another 'winged wonder' to be exhibited at a fair at some future date?

NOTES

1. 'Ugh! Such a Horrid Monster! It Attacks Two Ladies on a Lonely Road. And a Desperate Race For Dear Life Ensues. At First the Horse Was Paralyzed With Fright. Then It Made a Wild Dash Down the Highway. The Ugly Beast Followed and Soon Caught Up. But Was Frightened Off By the Timely Arrival of Two Farmers and Their Dogs', *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Cincinnati, Ohio, 23 Sep 1893.

2. Ibid.

3. 'What Was It? Horrible Monster That Attacked Two Women on a Lonely Road', *St. John Daily Sun*, New Brunswick, Canada, 23 Oct 1893.

4. 'A Horrible Monster. It Probably Escaped from the Portico of Chinese Bazzar in the Midway Plaisance at the World's Fair', *Huntsville Gazette*, Huntsville, Alabama, 30 Sep 1893; 'A Horrible Monster. It Probably Escaped from the Portico of Chinese Bazaar in the Midway Plaisance at the World's Fair', *Decatur Daily Republican*, Decatur, Illinois, 25 Sept 1893; *Jefferson County Democrat*, Mt Vernon, Illinois, 27 Sept 1893; *Petersburg Pike County Democrat*, Petersburg, Indiana, 29 Sep 1893.

5. 'Monster Seen Near Greensburg. Two Women Chased by a Nondescript 'Varmint', *Logansport Pharos*, Logansport, Indiana, 25 Sep 1893; *Westville Indicator*, Westville, Indiana, 29 Sep 1893.

6. 'The Biggest Snake Story', *Times Picayune*, New Orleans, Louisiana, 28 Sep 1893.

7. 'Chased by a Tree-climbing Boojum', *The Sun*, New York, New York, 9 Oct1893; 'Strange Stories By Telegraph. Chased by a Tree-climbing Boojum', *The Milwaukee Journal*, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 12 Oct 1893.

8. 'What Women can See In The Dark', *The World*, New York, 25 Sep 1893.

9. *Spencer Democrat*, Spencer, Indiana, 28 Sept 1893; 'The Gorilla Again', *Lawrence Weekly World*, Lawrence, Kansas, 19 Oct 1893.

10. 'A Wonderful Bird', *Fort Wayne Gazette*, Fort Wayne, Indiana, 12 Sep 1886.

11. 'Going To Be Exhibited. The Winged Monster of the Air Described in Sunday's Gazette to be at the Fair', *Fort Wayne Gazette*, Fort Wayne, Indiana, 14 Sep 1886.

12. *The Fort Wayne Sentinel*, Fort Wayne, Indiana, 15 Sep 1886.

13. 'A Bird Bonanza. Mr. And Mrs. Mann are making a Fortune on the Road', *The Fort Wayne Sentinel*, Fort Wayne, Indiana, 29 Sep 1886. The newspaper quotes the *Times* of South Bend, Indiana.

14. 'A New and Curious Bird', *Galveston Daily News*, Galveston, Texas, 26 Jun 1887; 'The Devil Of Leeds. Ancient Tradition Recalled by a Chance Newspaper Paragraph', *Elkhart Sentinel*, Elkhart, Indiana, 15 Oct 1887; 'The Leeds Devil. Discovery of an Oviparous Feathered Biped of Human Origin', *The Evening Telegram*, New York, 7 Dec 1887.

15. 'Quit His Run. An Ever-Living, Owl-Faced Fiend of the Jersey-Lightning Region', *Macon Telegraph*, Macon, Georgia, 4 Jul 1893.

16. I have written about the correlations between the geographical dispersal of fortean newspaper clippings and the gradual evolution of such tales in 'The Topography Of The Damned', *Anomalist 14*, 2010.

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APOCALYPSE NOT

New Age doom-merchants, latter-day Christian prophets and Ken Barlow from *Coronation Street* all assured us that when the Maya Long Count calendar ran out on 21 December 2012, we'd be facing the End of the World (at least as we knew it). Well, the End was not nigh... so how exactly are these latest in a long line of failed prophets explaining the Apocalyptic no-show? And what, if anything, did happen on that not-so-fateful day last December?

In this special, 300th-issue symposium, sociologist of alternative religions DAVID V BARRETT, student of 2012 spirituality KEVIN WHITESIDES, fortean troublemaker PETER BROOKESMITH and film-maker RICHARD STANLEY are our guides through the last days of the 13th bak'tun and beyond...

RONALDO SCHEMIDT/ AFP / GETTY IMAGES

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COPING STRATEGIES FOR FAILED PROPHETS

NOT ENOUGH FAITH? GOD'S BOUNDLESS MERCY? A TIMETABLE MISCALCULATION? THERE ARE PLENTY OF EXCUSES TO CHOSE FROM WHEN PROPHECY FAILS, AS DAVID V BARRETT EXPLAINS

People have been forecasting the imminent end of the world (or the dawning of the wonderful New Age) for millennia – and every one of them who named the date has one thing in common: each and every one was wrong. Any prophet with a ha'porth of sense would set the date for at least 50 years off to avoid such inevitable embarrassment – but too many end up having to wipe egg off their faces. Right now, true believers in the 2012 'Mayan' Apocalypse are having to explain away their lack of results; perhaps they can take some comfort in the fact that they have plenty of previous examples of folly to draw on.

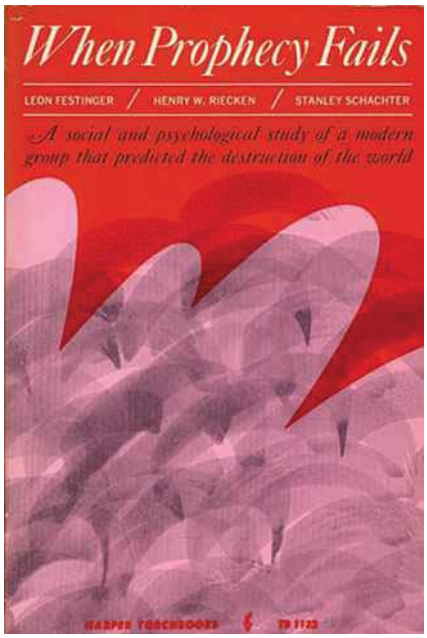
One of the earliest flying saucer groups, based in the American Midwest, predicted that a UFO would come to collect them before a destructive flood on 21 December 1954. How they coped with this not happening became the basis of the sociological classic *When Prophecy Fails* (1956) by Leon Festinger, Henry Riecken and Stanley Schacter, and lay behind the development of Festinger's famous theory of cognitive dissonance – the mental distress caused when beliefs or expectations are out of step with reality. The non-event and the controversial infiltration of the tiny UFO group by social scientists also inspired Alison Lurie's novel *Imaginary Friends* (1967), dramatised on BBC Radio 4 in 2011.

Festinger's theory and his methodology have been challenged, most notably by leading American scholar of new religions J Gordon Melton, who points out flaws in his suppositions and reasoning, and his lack of understanding of millennial religions.[1]

The thwarted expectations of Festinger's UFO group were nothing new. There is a long tradition of Christian groups being disappointed by the non-arrival of Jesus on the date they foretold. William Miller in 1843 and 1844 ("the Great Disappointment"), the Jehovah's Witnesses in 1874, 1914, 1925 and 1975 and the Worldwide Church of God in 1975 are perhaps the best known. Worldwide founder Herbert W Armstrong's booklet *1975 in Prophecy*, first published in 1956, oddly became unavailable from the mid-Seventies! More recently, we had Harold Camping offering first May 21 and then October 21, 2011 as the End of Days (see **FT277:26-27; 285:34-37; 287:5**), and Ronald Weinland, leader of a small offshoot from the Worldwide Church, who set the date for 27 May 2012.[2]

ABOVE: Apocalypse then – an illustration from Herbert W Armstrong's *1975 in Prophecy*.

TOO MANY PROPHETS END UP HAVING TO WIPE EGG OFF THEIR FACES


When Prophecy Fails
LEON FESTINGER / HENRY W. RIECKEN / STANLEY SCHACHTER
A social and psychological study of a modern group that predicted the destruction of the world

Despite the expectations of popular writers, very few religious groups forecast Jesus's return in the millennium year of 2000. Just as few, if any, had done so in 1000: the idea that thousands of believers in sackcloth and ashes awaited Jesus's second coming exactly 1,000 years after his first is "a romantic invention, dating back no further than the 16th century".[3] But belief in Jesus's imminent return goes right back to the New Testament writers,[4] and has been the defining feature of Christian millennialist groups in almost every century since then.[5] How do they cope with the fact that he has not (at least not yet) kept to the schedule others keep setting for him?

Both the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Worldwide Church of God lost some members, who were disappointed by Jesus's non-arrival and disillusioned by the fallibility (or worse, the falsehoods) of their Churches' leaders. But, in fact, comparatively few left either religion, because, as Gordon Melton argues, "within religious groups, prophecy seldom fails".[6] Over the centuries, religious groups have developed a number of coping techniques to deal with the disconfirmation of their deeply held beliefs (see table at left). One of the simplest and most common is: "We miscalculated; come back next year" – which is broadly what William Miller's followers said in 1843 and Harold Camping said in 2011. More subtle coping strategies are: "It occurred, but on an invisible plane" (which adds another layer of belief but has the twin advantages that believers can still claim it was right, and that they can't be proven wrong); "The Lord was merciful and stayed his hand" (which emphasises God's love and restraint and the niceness of the prophet,

	POSITIVE/FORTHRIGHT	NEGATIVE/EVASIVE
HUMAN FAILURE	WE WERE WRONG	WE NEVER SAID THAT
SPIRITUAL EXPLANATION	GOD IN HIS MERCY STAYED HIS HAND	PEOPLE'S FAITH WAS NOT STRONG ENOUGH
REDEFINE THE SITUATION	OUR CALCULATIONS WERE INCORRECT, HE'S ACTUALLY COMING NEXT YEAR	HE DID RETURN BUT INVISIBLY OR ON A SPIRTUAL PLANE

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who must have persuaded God); and "Your faith wasn't strong enough" (which shifts the blame to the religion's members). Two others are a flat denial: "We never claimed that anyway" (millennial religions have a long history of rewriting history) and, very occasionally, an honest "We were mistaken" or "Our enthusiasm got the better of us" – which is what the Jehovah's Witnesses eventually said.[7] A beautiful late Victorian description of cognitive dissonance, decades before Festinger's coining of the term, comes in an account of British millennial group the Catholic Apostolic Church; when Jesus hadn't returned by 1855 they were "forced by the stern logic of life to turn their backs upon their past history, and to make their doctrines square with facts when facts absolutely refuse to square with doctrines".[8]

The coping strategies of disappointed millennialist Christians, then, are much the same as those of other failed prophets. Insufficient faith is high on the list. The Maitreya is the coming Saviour figure in all the world religions, according to Scottish prophet Benjamin Creme's Theosophy-based teachings. When the Maitreya didn't turn up at an Indian restaurant in the East End of London in July 1985 to greet a group of journalists Creme had invited to meet him, it seems it was because of (who would have thought it?) the journalists' insincerity and lack of belief.[9]

The Raelian movement want to build an embassy for when our extraterrestrial creators, the Elohim, visit the Earth, and expect this to happen before 2030 – but they've already said that the space visitors won't come if they don't feel they're welcomed by the majority of mankind – which seems a pretty safe advance get-out clause.[10]

Uriel (Ruth Norman, 1900-1993), one of the founders of Unarius, a UFO movement based near San Diego, California, told her followers that aliens would come openly to Earth in 1974, then 1975, then 1976, and then 2001 – by which time she could no longer personally be embarrassed by her failed prophecy. Unarius's justification of the 2001 non-event is that the Space Brothers have now decided not to appear visibly "until people stop their warlike attitudes and practices".[11] They may be waiting some time.

It's a safe bet that the Mayan preppers will, between them, use most or all of these tried and tested coping strategies.

CASE STUDY: RONALD WEINLAND

Ronald Weinland, a former minister in the strongly millennial Worldwide Church of God, founded the Church of God – Preparing for the Kingdom of God and calls himself "a prophet for this end-time".[12] In his books *The Prophesied End-Time* (2004) and *2008: God's Final Witness* (2006) he describes the very-soon-to-come events, and states that he is one of the Two Witnesses of Revelation 11 and Zechariah 4:14;[13] he later announced that his wife is the other one.[14] Several other former Worldwide Church members make the same claim – one minister told me he has met five of the Two Witnesses! – but Weinland remains by far the most prominent of them, even if, as is so often the case, his online presence is considerably larger than his actual following.

The failure of any of his specific prophecies for 2008 to occur didn't faze him, despite his having written: "If the things written in the book do not shortly come to pass, then what is written here is false, and I am false".[15] Instead, he castigates those who criticise him: "Foolishly there are those who are quick to find fault by saying we are wrong or that I am a false prophet since physical destruction did not come at a time I had previously stated."[16] Weinland used versions of two of the common coping strategies for failed prophecies:

The reality is that the Seventh Seal of Revelation was opened on 14 November 2008, and then 30 days later the First Trumpet sounded...

Thank God that these massive powers of end-time destruction have not yet been unleashed. The kind of suffering that will finally come to pass is horrific beyond comprehension.

God is being merciful by temporarily holding back the day when the Second Trumpet sounds and massive physical destruction begins...

This "holding back" is in large part due to the result of God answering the prayers of His people who set aside a time for fasting.[17]

Weinland went on to set a specific date, 27 May 2012, and stuck to it till the last. In a sermon the day before, he pronounced: "I believe this is to be my last sermon in this physical life... We're there! We're at the end of 6,000 years of human history. That's what we believe. We are hours away from Christ returning in the atmosphere of this Earth."[18]

Three days later, he wrote: "May 27th has come and gone, so how can I say this is still the day of Christ's return? The answer is a matter of God's revelation which is spiritual in nature, but having a definite physical outcome. It is prophetic. I did not know that when I stated this was the 'day' of Christ's coming. I viewed it in a physical manner until God revealed that it was spiritual."[19]

A few weeks later he was able to be more explicit, using two further coping strategies, redefining terms and shifting the date. "Yes, the 'Day of the Lord' is a year in actual length. May 27, 2012, was the beginning of the 'Day of the Lord' when Jesus Christ will return on the final day of Pentecost 2013."[20]

So we can still look forward to it in just a couple of months' time – and it should be a welcome release for Weinland, who is just beginning a three-and-a-half-year prison sentence for tax evasion. The judge had clearly done his homework into Weinland's beliefs; apocalypse-watchers will immediately recognise three and a half years as the first half of the Tribulation.[21] FT

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ABOVE: Waiting for the space brothers – Charles Spiegel of the Unarius Academy of Science had his welcome sign up in 2001, ready for the mass landing already promised for 1974, 1975 and 1976.

1 J Gordon Melton, "Spiritualisation and Reaffirmation: What Really Happens When Prophecy Fails", *American Studies*, no 26, 1985, pp17-29.

2 See David V Barrett, *The Fragmentation of a Sect*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013 for more information on the Worldwide Church of God and its roughly 400 offshoots.

3 Damian Thompson, *The End of Time: Faith and fear in the shadow of the millennium*. London: Random House/Minerva, 1996, p37.

4 I Peter 4:7, I John 2:18, etc.

5 See Chapter 7, "It's the End of the World as We Know It", in David V Barrett, *The New Believers: A Survey of Sects, Cults and Alternative Religions*. London, Cassell, 2001 pp70-81; also Eugen Weber, *Apocalypses: Prophecies, cults and millennial beliefs throughout the ages*, London: Hutchinson, 1999; Thompson 1996.

6 Melton, 1985, p20.

7 *Awake*, 22 June, 1995 p8; Barrett 2001, p191.

8 Edward Miller, "Irvingism: or the Catholic Apostolic Church" in *Religious Systems of the World*, 9th edn 1908, p598.

9 David V Barrett, *A Brief Guide to Secret Religions*, Constable & Robinson, 2011, pp41-3.

10 Barrett, 2011, pp130-1.

11 Diana Tumminia, "When the Archangel Died" in Partridge, Christopher (ed), *UFO Religions*, London: Routledge, 2003 p78; Barrett, 2011, pp116-7.

12 Ronald Weinland, *The Prophesied End-Time*, Dallas, TX: The-end.com, 2004 (end flap).

13 Ronald Weinland, *2008: God's Final Witness*. Dallas, TX: The-end.com 2006, p16.

14 http://ronaldweinland.com/?p=75, April 18, 2008.

15 Weinland 2004: 145.

16 http://ronaldweinland.com/?p=80, March 6, 2009.

17 Ibid.

18 www.cog-pkg.org/audio/docs/2012-05-26_A_New_World.pdf. Sermon: "A New World", May 26, 2012.

19 http://ronaldweinland.com/?p=115, May 30, 2012.

20 http://ronaldweinland.com/?p=117, June 15, 2012.

21 Daniel 9: 27, Daniel 12: 11, Revelation 11: 3.

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IF AT FIRST YOUR DOOMSDAY FAILS -TRY, TRY AGAIN...

WHILE CELEBRITY ENDORSERS OF THE MAYAN APOCALYPSE HAVE SAID "WHOOPS! MY BAD," THINGS ARE TOUGHER FOR NEW AGE PROPHETS, SAYS KEVIN WHITESIDES

The 13th bak'tun of the Maya Long Count calendar has come to a conclusion. 21 December 2012 has come and gone. The world is still here and intact and we don't appear to be, collectively at least, any more conscious, enlightened, or ascended than we were on 20 December last year. As we push into the early months of 2013, a topic that a few short months ago was on the lips (and Facebook pages) of nearly everyone seems to have since been largely forgotten. Though pop media attention-grabbers Spencer Pratt and Heidi Montag will not soon forget the approximately $10 million that they spent in anticipation of asteroidal destruction (which they used in a variety of odd ways, such as buying expensive purses, giving $15,000 cash birthday gifts to friends, and paying people $200 a pop to, literally, open doors for them), much of the rest of the world seems to have moved on as though nothing were ever supposed to have happened. The cognitive situation is somewhat different for those such as 'Speidi' (the face-clawingly annoying acronym for the pop-culture couple), however, who made strong public commitments of action prior to the Impending Doomsday/ Dawning New Age. In the aftermath of failed prophecy, they would have to re-explain the situation to themselves in order to account, both to themselves and to an awaiting public, for their apparently ill-placed apocalyptic enthusiasms. For Pratt, perhaps unsurprisingly, the response was simple: "Here's some advice. Definitely do not spend your money thinking asteroids are going to come." In this case, the celebrity couple is able to maintain popular attention and cultural clout in spite of (or more likely, because of) such naïve and extravagant quirks. They are already bringing in more cash and can shrug off the lavish excess as part and parcel of the 'celebrity' life. Those with an interest in the realm of tabloid celebrity have long ago come to expect such eccentric behavior from its popular idols.

We do not, however, typically allow the same lenience and acceptance of anticipatory failure for our prophets. Whether or not we ever believed them, we hold them to their forecasts and demand that they account for deficiencies in their predictions when they fail to pan out. They have invested not only their money but also their careers and reputations in their advertised predictive capabilities, and, perhaps more importantly, the investment of time, money, energy, hopes and fears on the part of their audiences. Where our naïve celebrities could wake up the next morning and say "Whoops, my bad", the response to the dawning of 22 December 2012 with business as usual elicited more complex reactions from those who had plied

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KEVIN WHITESIDES

ABOVE: Self-proclaimed Maya spiritual leader Ac Tah leads his group in a 'solemn' procession to the sacred site of Chichen Itza early on the morning of the Solstice. To demonstrate the importance of the ceremonial walk, he wields the Mystical Disposal Coffee Cup of Transcendence. **LEFT:** Spencer Pratt and Heidi Montag, still smiling after wasting $10 million dollars in anticipation of asteroidal doom.

GERYL QUICKLY FELL BACK INTO HIS OLD HABITS OF PREDICTING DESTRUCTION

their prophetic wares in the marketplace of apocalyptic apprehension.

In 2007, Patrick Geryl announced that he had uncovered a unique mathematical theory, unknown to anyone else in the world, which detailed not only past cataclysmic destructions of human civilisation on Earth (including Atlantis) but also foretold of future cataclysms. In particular, Geryl warned that his calculations demonstrated the unavoidable conclusion, with no possibility of error, that the world would be utterly destroyed at the putative conclusion of the Maya Long Count calendar cycle in December 2012. The entire Earth would flip upside-down, the oceans would scour the land, and all volcanoes in the world would erupt simultaneously. Geryl assured us that our families, homes, and any mundane goals and pleasures have "absolutely no use. In one day this super-catastrophe will cause the loss of thousands of years of work… You have no idea how bad and difficult it will be."

And, how did Geryl know this would happen? "The message of the old super-scientists is more than clear: the magnetic field of the Earth will reverse in one go and completely destroy our civilisation. The people who discovered this sent us a message in an international language, summarised in mathematical and astronomical codes." In other words, the brilliant and advanced ancients warned us, and Geryl claimed to be the only person able to crack the code. Many others would have told you very similar things about their own predictions: Carl Calleman knew with equal certainty that his calculations revealed that the 'true' end of the Maya calendar was 28 October 2011 and that we would have achieved, on that day, 'Unity Consciousness', the highest level of consciousness achievable in the Universe. Notably, Calleman's voice largely disappeared from discussion of Maya-calendrical prophecy after that date came and went. He did, however, post the following on his website on 31 December 2012, after having been silent for many months, which seems to indicate an attempted comeback: "The Mayan calendar is not about specific dates," a significantly changed tune for Calleman. He went on to suggest "a need for further scrutiny… to how the Long Count… would continue after the thirteenth baktun comes to an end." He also explained "why we did not experience a discontinuity at the baktun shift" and why the 'shift' that took place on 28 October 2011 "was very important and no shift of a similar importance is in fact visible on the horizon, especially since the

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Long Count should now be recognised as continuing indefinitely." Again, this is a major shift from Calleman's previous writings, which stressed that the calendar had a unique end-date and that specific effects would be felt at that time. However, it is a shift in rhetoric that will be welcomed by many and may allow Calleman to continue his career as a popular interpreter of Maya calendars for contemporary spiritual seekers.

While these tactics of re-interpretation may seem post-hoc and overly-convenient to those who are already sceptical, it's not hard to see how it would be cognitively difficult for someone who made Maya-calendrical evangelism into a career to step back and say: "I was entirely wrong. I apologise to those who I may have misled. I can see why you would be hesitant to trust my pronouncements in the future". Not only would it be difficult to say this, it might be difficult to accept that something you have invested so much of your own and other people's lives in could have been entirely misguided. Better to discover that you had overlooked or misinterpreted some nuance which leaves you appearing well-intentioned and humanly fallible but still doing important work to which people should continue to pay attention.

This may help to explain why a celebrity like Spencer Pratt would find it so much easier to say "Dude, I fucked up!" Such an admission does not affect his livelihood and his reputation, which is largely built upon being extravagant and doing ridiculous things in the public eye. Whereas Patrick Geryl's $130,000 Armageddon expense budget was built up over years of proselytising and with help from investors, Pratt and Montag's multi-million dollar spending spree could be earned and spent in rapid succession; and, in fact, the couple made back nearly four-times Geryl's entire budget ($500,000) from a recent one-week film shoot of *Celebrity Big Brother*.

So, what has been Patrick Geryl's response to the continuance of our civilisation? Well, for a start, he has since removed all of his videos from his Youtube channel and completely abandoned his howtosurvive2012.com website (Step One in rewriting history: eliminate any evidence contrary to your current PR). Less than two weeks before the 2012 December solstice, Geryl announced that he had given up, that too few people had believed in his message and contributed to his survival plans, that he would not bother with the more than $130,000 in survival gear that he had purchased, and that he would simply stay home and spend the day as normal. In an interview two days after the eventful but non-apocalyptic date, he expressed regret and shame over his end-of-the-world prediction saying: "I just ruined my life." I suppose old habits die hard, though, and perhaps the only way to feel that you haven't ruined your life is simply to continue with more of the same. Only a week later, on 30 December, Geryl made an announcement on his Facebook page:

"Currently researching the faults. Will take a few weeks... Theories are complicated and nobody helps me... Hope to find better calculations soon... although I had 50 per cent of the X flares right... and almost 80 per cent of the seven plus earthquakes..."

And, again, on 5 January 2013:

"I predicted an earthquake for today on www.urbansurvival 2 days ago. Only didn't expect it would be so big, because it was induced by the tiny non-planet Pluto! This is very, very, very serious stuff... expect serious things from March 15 till July 1."

So, while Geryl gave up his 2012 survival plans just before the date, and expressed shame and regret immediately after, he quickly fell back into his old patterns of predicting destruction.

At the other end of the spectrum, those aficionados who lean more strongly toward utopian interpretations of 2012 tended to hedge their bets in coaxing anticipation in their audiences. Adrian Gilbert, for example, on the same day that Patrick Geryl announced his intention to abandon his survival plans, offered two likelihoods for the significance of 21 December 2012. The first, he called "graduation day", which he equated with "biblical prophecies for Judgment Day and ascension." The righteous simply disappear victoriously. In his second scenario, humanity remains Earthbound but gets a consciousness upgrade: "a new step in human evolution from 'Homo sapiens sapiens' to 'Homo even more sapiens than that'." Gilbert made sure to maintain a distance from the firm predictions that resulted in Geryl's initial feelings of shame when his forecast didn't pan out: "Will this actually happen?" Gilbert asked. "Well maybe not all at once, but it is a tempting possibility. I can't wait." With this simple qualification, Gilbert whetted the spiritual appetites of his audience with utopian predictions and simultaneously distanced himself from feelings of antipathy when his predictions failed to manifest as the day of the Solstice came and went. At the same time, he maintained allure with his suggestion that the effects of this new consciousness might come in a slow-release package. The New Age seems to be constantly around the next corner.

LEFT: Home-made shirts abounded on the Solstice. The other side of this man's read 'Welcome Space Brothers'.

KEVIN WHITESIDES

And, in case you are already nostalgic for that feeling of millennial expectancy, fear not: new dates are available now for your edification and amusement.

There are those who are already anticipating the conclusion of an Aztec calendar cycle in the year 2027 (Google it and see!). And, if 2027 is too far away for you, there are key upcoming dates in 2013. Eden Sky, heir to the production and dissemination of the Dreamspell calendar (see **FT285:38-39**), says that "According to Dr Argüelles' pioneering Galactic time decodings, the time period between December 22, 2012 and July 25, 2013 is a germination period of the New World Age – an accelerated time of adjustment, integration, and regeneration. His work indicates July 26, 2013 as initiating 'Galactic Synchronization'… marking the start of a vast new cycle in which we may finally comprehend ourselves as creative members of a Galactic whole; a consciously unified microcosm – macrocosm." Or just wait for Patrick Geryl to finish his recalculations… or for Carl Calleman to engage in "further scrutiny"… or for Adrian Gilbert's "tempting possibility" of a slow-release New Age that doesn't happen on a single day.

Regardless of whether you find any of these choices palatable, accept another available variation, come up with your own prophecy, disregard it all as very silly or actively try to battle it as pernicious, I am confident that there will be a steady supply of new cataclysms and dawning utopias available in the prophetic marketplace well into the foreseeable future.

Whatever your position, you will have plenty to accept, reject, create, ignore, or deride from new prophets… as well as from the usual suspects. FT

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DON'T GET FOOLED AGAIN

PETER BROOKESMITH BELIEVES THE FAILED 2012 APOCALYPSE TAUGHT US QUITE A BIT ABOUT THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT'S REAL MOTIVATIONS

So – no end of the world on 21 December last, then, and no obvious blooming of 'higher levels of consciousness' around the world; no sign of planet Nibiru swanning by and curdling the milk; no cosmic vibrational uplifts; no drastic pole shifts. No day off for Santa, his elves, or his feckless reindeer either. The 'ancient Maya prophecy' that supposedly said all this would happen doesn't exist and never did. Millions who may have heard of the prophecy and the hoopla surrounding it took precisely no notice, if you discount some weary rolling of eyeballs. Somebody or other is forever wailing The End Is Nigh. Communal mental numbing is followed by unsurprising non-event. So was there anything to learn from the latest slew of apocalyptic hysteria?

First bear in mind that the 2012 Apocalypse was a construct of gurus of what's called the 'New Age'.[1] Second, that the New Age embraces a pick'n'mix 'spirituality' looted from various religious traditions, the more obscure ethnically and the more easily romanticised the better. In other words – to adapt Margot Adler's comment on Wicca in *Drawing Down the Moon* – the New Age is adept at "stealing from any source that didn't run away too fast", and New Agers delight in brandishing their moral enlightenments in our faces. They also tend loudly to champion environmentalism, organic food, alternative medicine, 'lost ancient wisdom', a vague pacifism, and take seriously a profusion of pseudoscientific fields from astrology and 'earth energies' to parapsychology and ufology. Intuition is preferred to a scientific approach to phenomena (or even facts). Such a counter-cultural miscellany creates an impression – specious as it may be – of affirmative, liberating individualism.

In fact, what New Age beliefs have in common, if anything, is recusancy: a rejection, at best a supercilious distrust, of almost anything allegedly conventional, conformist, 'linear', or tainted by 'Establishment' thinking of any kind. But unlike, say, Marxism, New Age thinking has no predictive, connective, explanatory vision: it is too eclectic to rest on any coherent philosophical foundation. It is, however, *against* almost everything that constitutes and underpins contemporary life in the post-Renaissance West – plus smoking and riding to hounds. Far from being liberating, the outlook begets a deadly, humourless conformity of its own, one that's inevitably steeped in disapproval. It is a kind of New Puritanism.

The New Age's projection of itself as spiritually progressive and its proclivity for cultural kleptomania seem to have been the immediate sources of the 2012 apocalyptic prophecy. What was *promoted* was not some dire Judgement Day, but the prospect that

HE PREDICTED "DESTRUCTION AND CATACLYSM BEYOND YOUR IMAGINATION"

humanity – all of it – would magically be subject to some vast (if vague) spiritual uplift and improvement. There would also be a "paradigm shift": all that pseudoscience from dowsing to psi would be deemed scientifically valid. *Coronation Street* actor Bill Roache said: "This will be the Golden Age, when a majority will know they are love and they are spiritual beings. We'll move into the golden age ... where we'll all love, we'll communicate telepathically... it will be a beautiful place to be." (See **FT294:17**)

That was what was promoted. But there *would* be a judgement, even if its seat was more nebulous than the bewhiskered Jahvist adjudicator of tradition. For Roache added: "Now, unfortunately, there are some cleansings that have to take place, where negative energy has to be discharged, and these will be in the form of earthquakes, hurricanes, floods and tsunamis." This is mild – killer meteors and superstorm Sandy notwithstanding – compared with what some other 2012 New Age prophets had on offer. You may recall from *FT*'s '2012 Watch' series that Daniel Srsa predicted: "a destruction and cataclysm beyond all your imagination and yet only such destruction will cleanse the world of its accumulated negative karma of the materialistic and selfish existence." Patrick Geryl asked: "What horrible chaos will terrorise your life for the foreseeable future?" We would endure "nothing but horror, pure unimaginable horror... Terrible hunger, cold and pain, and more will rule your daily life..." Most tellingly, he declared: "For a lot of people this will be sufficient reason not to choose the effort needed to survive...

LEFT: Patrick Geryl was looking foward to "pure, unimaginable horror". **RIGHT:** In China, Liu Qiyuan had built his own surival pod, which might still prove useful come the next tsunami.

preferring to die in the apocalyptic events than to keep on living in a seemingly endless fight."

Such utterances do rather rip away the New Age's façade of sweetness, light, and tolerance. Behind that mask, it seems, lies at least an unnerving misanthropy, at worst a hatred of life, the world and everything. The world as we know it is so hideous that the New Age would really like to destroy it. Or 'cleanse' it, in their tacky euphemism. This loathing – and more particularly its intensity – and attendant, half-open elation at the prospect of extreme and widespread death, destruction, and misery, came as something of a surprise as I trawled for examples of apocalyptic weirdness in 2012. It bears some scrutiny.

Anthropologist Victor Turner (1920–83) coined the term 'antistructure', which he broadly defined as "the dissolution of normative social structure",[2] and which he associated with liminal states and conditions, be they personal, social, or intellectual. Taken as a network or clump of recusant attitudes and approaches to the modern world, New Age thinking is certainly antistructural and can equally be called liminal, since *as a whole* it is intellectually disorganised and marginalised, partly through choice and partly by mainstream disdain or bemusement. The New Age also constitutes a *communitas*, Turner's term for "a mode of relationship" among people in liminal conditions who in various ways identify themselves as a single body. A communitas, by definition, is counter-cultural and potentially contrarian: how it defines itself, Turner says, "depend[s] upon the way in which it symbolises the abrogation, negation, or inversion of the normative structure in which its participants are quotidianly involved."[3]

In *The Ritual Process*, he remarks[4] of millenarian movements that they "correspond pretty closely" with the "properties of liminality in tribal rituals" (those ornaments of the early New Age, the hippies, referred to themselves as a 'tribe'). Out of a long list of such properties, we might mention these: reduction of all to the same status level, minimisation of sex distinctions, sacred instruction, and the maximisation of religious, as opposed to secular, attitudes and behaviour. Turner notes that millenarians' drive to distinguish themselves from the society from which they spring "soon becomes exhausted, and the 'movement' becomes itself an institution among other institutions – often one more fanatical and militant than the rest, for the reason that it feels itself to be the unique bearer of universal human truths."

This righteous fanaticism is surely manifest in the 'prophecies' quoted above (a mere *soupçon* of many such pronouncements). Other properties from Turner's catalogue, while not exclusive to the New Age, are characteristic of many of its adherents. So one feels justified in saying that although New Age thinking

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is not comprehensively so, it contains a powerful intrinsic element of millenarian apocalypticism. One fundamental principle of millennial–apocalyptic projections is that few will be chosen and many will be cast into outer darkness.

Earlier I mentioned the New Age's partiality for intuition over a scientific, evidential approach to phenomena – which, I would argue, is an aspect of "the maximisation of religious, as opposed to secular, attitudes and behaviour" noticed by Turner. This is amply illustrated in many 2012 prophecies made in opposition to reams of scientific evidence. Elsewhere it manifests in interpretations of the 'meaning' of, and especially the motivating forces behind, crop circles (see **FT299:40-42**), in the New Age's take on environmentalism, and perhaps most powerfully in its embrace of all manner of pseudoscience. Pseudoscience has been walking up and down in the Earth far longer than the New Age, but one of its defining peculiarities is that the dubious notions it purveys are always framed *as if* they were arrived at scientifically. Opposition to or contempt for science (because it is confused with scientism) paradoxically consorts with embracing it as a touchstone, to which the claimed 'proofs' or logicality of some stupendously scatterbrained propositions implicitly appeal.

Given the misconstruction and caricature of science as scientism – a cold, hard, materialist conception of the world that unlike actual science pretends to have all the answers to all problems, especially unsolved ones – it's a truism that pseudoscience is a misplaced attempt to restore a sense of wonder to the world. Perhaps more to the point is Prof. Michael D Gorin's observation that pseudoscience is the *shadow* of science. Gorin cogently argues:

"A shadow is cast by something; *it has no substance of its own*... The brighter the light of science – that is, the greater its cultural prestige and authority – the sharper the shadow, and the more the fringe flourishes... Since World War II, science has been consistently prestigious, and heterodox doctrines have proliferated... Paradoxically, pseudoscience is a sign of health, not disease. Shadows are... an inevitable consequence of light." [5]

Gorin's image is not too far from Turner's concept of antistructure and its concomitants. The lesson I see here is that the violence embedded in the 2012 prophecies in part reflects a rage at the current high status of science in our culture, combined with the prophets' deadly narcissism in believing they are guardians of 'universal human truths'. The irony is that that rage is based on a misconception of science, its messiness and adventurousness and capacity for revelation. Even so, that does not explain the virulence of the destruction for which it yearns.

In *The Theory of Cognitive Dissonance,* Leon Festinger recounts certain instances in which alarmist predictions, specifically in the form of rumours circulating in the aftermath of earthquakes, reflected not anxieties about the future but *current* anxieties; or, as he puts it, "these rumours predicting even worse disasters to come were not 'anxiety provoking' at all but were rather 'anxiety justifying'... Perhaps these rumours provided people with information that fit the way they already felt." Festinger justifies this rumination sufficiently [6] to provoke one to wonder if it would help illuminate the New Age's (often unadmitted) fascination for global ruination. What, in short, presently so exercises the New Age imagination that it welcomes a future cataclysm?

Victor Turner's observation that an antistructural communitas may involve the "inversion of the normative structure" suggests a mirror image. Mirrored reflections flip what is front of them, but your left ear doesn't disappear while you're shaving, it just looks as if it's become your right ear. The idea of a final Judgement is so embedded in Western Judaeo-Christian culture that perhaps it's *not* so surprising to find a shadow of it in New Age thinking. In 1987, Jose Arguelles called for 144,000 'convergers' to kick-start the New Age, but that's a rare instance of conscious echolalia (*cf.* Revelation VII, 1–17). The comprehensiveness of New Age contrarianism suggests that the world as we know it is in its eyes *wholly* a World Gone Wrong, and 2012 prophets and heralds see it as containing the inevitability of its own self-destruction. Thus, for instance, spake Colin Andrews [7] on 3 January 2013:

> *The current media is going down the plug hole along with the politicians, the banks and multinational thieves who have brought us to the end of the old cycle of human activity... It's as real as real that the planet is under great stress by the actions of too many people and it's as real as real that humankind is being confronted by the results of long term actions based upon greed, power and disrespect for others and the planet. It's as real as real that our weather and climate is sinking our coastal cities and millions are now at risk....*

The 'conventional' Day of Judgement sees God dispensing salvation or damnation according to individual moral success or failure. In the New Age inversion, people doom themselves. This allows the enlightened elect to take no moral responsibility and to experience no affect for the deaths and disasters to come, while having the puritanical satisfaction of seeing all wrongs righted.

Lack of affect is one of the prime signs of psychopathy. It lies buried under the New Age's tree-hugging spirituality and pseudoscientific 'open-mindedness', in horrible contradiction to the movement's self-promotion and self-image. The politics of this, should any develop, will bear watching. Like members of another caustic modern puritanical movement, New Agers are not bourgeois. FT

This article is expanded from an essay first published in The Philosopher's Magazine, No 60 (January 2013).

NOTES

1 Joseph Gelfer's collection *2012: Decoding the counter-cultural apocalypse* (Equinox, 2011) provides all the documentation, and no shortage of horrified fascination, for those who need it.

2 *From Ritual to Theatre*, PAJ Publications, 1982, p28

3 *The Ritual Process*, Aldine Transaction 1969/2009, p131; *From Ritual to Theatre*, p47. Edith Turner has since developed and broadened the concept of *communitas* to show its appearance in contexts that are not antistructural, although this was the framework within which Turner originally identified it. See Edith Turner, *Communitas: The Anthropology of Collective Joy*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

4 See pp111-2.

5 "Separating the Pseudo from Science", *The Chronicle*, 17 September 2012: http://chronicle.com/article/Separating-the-Pseudo-From/134412/; emphasis added

6 Row, Peterson & Co 1957/Stanford UP 1957/1989, pp.vii, 236–41

7 http://colinandrews.blogspot.co.uk

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DOWNWIND OF THE APOCALYPSE

RICHARD STANLEY SPENT THE DAYS LEADING UP TO 21 DECEMBER 2012 IN THE FRENCH VILAGE OF BUGARACH. HE LOOKS BACK AT THE SURREAL MEDIA CIRCUS AND THE REACTION OF THE FRENCH AUTHORITIES

A chilly wind keens through the deserted streets of Bugarach (see **FT285:72-75**), the tiny village in the French Corbieres that for a few short days over the Winter Solstice found itself at the centre of a vortex of misguided media attention. Rumours had been circulating in cyberspace for at least a year or two that the curiously shaped magnetic mountain dominating the area might offer sanctuary from the hypothetical Apocalypse that some folk insisted would engulf the world after the Mayan long count calender ran out of steam on 21 December 2012. Others vaguely hinted at a coming 'change' in consciousness, the death of capitalism, the arrival of extraterrestrials or even the return of the Cathars and Mary Magdalene to usher in a 'New Age' of peace and plenty. There is, of course, nothing new about this sort of thinking. A loose configuration of optimistic liberals and outright airheads have been waiting for the Aquarian Age to drop the other shoe ever since the notion caught on back in the Sixties, and the End of the World has been hotly anticipated since the beginning of recorded history. A similar tremor of panic swept the Western world in 2000, and long-term *FT* readers will doubtless be familiar with the brouhaha surrounding the millennium and the Y2K bug. What made events in Bugarach rather different from these previous spasms of mass hysteria was that this time the fever seemed confined solely to the media and the minds of the civic authorities responsible for the military

IF ANY MORE FREAKS BLEW INTO TOWN THE MAYOR WOULD CALL THE ARMY

PATRICK AVENTURIER / GETTY IMAGES

intervention that cut the village off from the outside world and rode roughshod over the rights of its inhabitants.

No one is quite sure how the frenzy began, although the village mayor, Jean-Pierre Delord, must shoulder a good part of the blame. The flamboyant small town politician who, for a short while, became an unlikely media celebrity describes himself as the *"last true socialist mayor in France"*, an appellation that masks his deeply conservative personal views. Concerned by the resurgence of paganism and the growing spiritualisation of what he considered to be *his* mountain, Delord let it be publicly known that if any more freaks blew into town he would call the Army. His words fell on the receptive ears of Georges Fenech, the then head of a government body named MIVILUDES (*Mission interministerielle de vigilance et de lutte contre les dérives sectaires* or *Interministerial Mission for Monitoring and Combatting Cultic Deviance)*. Fenech saw the situation in Bugarach as an opportunity to publicise his 'zero tolerance policy', invoking the spectres of Waco and Jonestown in his press releases and creating a climate of fear aimed at manipulating the public into accepting disproportionately heavy-handed tactics. Claiming that thousands of UFO cultists were converging on the area and that France ran the risk of facing another mass suicide, Fenech argued that a state of martial law should be declared in the region.

ABOVE: Bugarach's magic mountain in December 2012. **BELOW:** Georges Fenech explains his 'zero-tolerance policy' to the assembled press pack.

British citizen Susie Harrison, a former resident of Glastonbury who moved to Bugarach some years ago after falling in love with the area's natural beauty and laid-back lifestyle, had been looking forward to the End of the World, seeing it as an excuse for an impromptu party. After posting a notification on Facebook that anyone coming to the village for the Solstice would be welcome to camp in her back garden, she found a posse of stern-faced French officials on her doorstep. Subjecting her property to a thorough search, the uniformed policemen informed her in no uncertain terms that: "We don't want anyone here or trying to get on that mountain." [1]

The full extent of what was euphemistically termed *Operation Controlled Freedom* became clear on 6 December when Fenech's measures were announced at a raucous public meeting in Rennes-les-Bains. Hundreds of policemen were to be mobilised and the mountain overflown by military jet fighters and helicopters fitted with state-

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of-the-art thermal imaging equipment. A unit of the Republican Guard had been bussed in from Paris to patrol the mountain on horseback and, henceforth, all vehicles entering the 'restricted zone' would need to have their passes visibly displayed. Non-residents caught crossing police lines would face strict fines or possible jail terms.

Yet still they came. Journalists and camera folk from all over the world, lured by the effervescent flame of a story that never really existed, set up camp in the village, turning it into a 24-hour media circus. Unable to find any 'true believers', they did as journalists have always done under such circumstances. They retired to the local drinking hole, now dubbed the 'Alien Bar', and set about interviewing each other. Jean Pierre Delord went to earth, barricading himself into the town hall after questions from the press pack began to grow increasingly uncomfortable.

The few newcomers who found their way into the restricted zone turned out to be either tourists motivated by pure curiosity, pranksters doing it for a dare or folk seeking out the press in order to publicise their own causes, among them a group of protesters demonstrating against a freeway development in northern France. Henry Lincoln, co-author of *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* and a gifted self-publicist in his own right, put in an appearance for 12.12.12, (noon, 12 December 2012). A seasoned pro, Henry pretended to angrily dismiss the press pack's attempts to interview him, insisting he was only there to purchase a bottle of End of the World wine as a souvenir. Finally, pinned down by an NBC crew at the Alien Bar, he grumpily explained on camera that he didn't believe there was anything "special" or "spiritual" about the area, maintaining, not without reason, that the whole fandango had been concocted by the media.

While the journalists cooled their heels, the locals and their unwelcome guests expressed themselves in increasingly outlandish ways. A team of Frenchmen in tin foil hats danced Gangnam style beside the town signpost, which was stolen and replaced four times in the course of the crisis, and a sculpture of the mountain fashioned from mashed potato was paraded through the streets and ceremonially eaten in the town square. Two thickset American Christians named Rob and Russ showed up, asking about "dæmonic rituals" going on in the caves beneath the mountain and hoping for hippy souls in need of saving. Instead, they were confronted by a cheerful former Eton boy named Dom dressed as a satyr, who serenaded them with a bawdy song on his pan-pipes. The two evangelists should have been right at home in this milieu as Jehovah's Witnesses believe the tribulation described in the Book of Revelation began in 1914 and we have been living in the End Times ever since. After due consideration, however, Rob and Russ decided there was "not enough darkness" in Bugarach and took off, opting to go to Central America for the Apocalypse instead.

As the sands of time ran out, it became increasingly clear that the hoards of suicidal 'planet people' anticipated in Fenech and Delord's paranoid proclamations were not going to show. When all was said and done, only two genuine 'End-of-the-Worlders' and one 'undecided' managed to make their way past police lines.

Ludovic, a former plumber from Bordeaux, had managed to slip through the cordon before Operation Controlled Freedom could tighten the screws and had been quietly camped out by the lake ever since. As a true believer he disdained the press, keeping them at arm's length throughout. Most folk figured he was one fry short of a happy meal, but Ludovic alone, out of all those assembled in the forbidden zone that bleak midwinter, seemed genuinely to believe the angels were coming for him. He insisted that at noon on 21 December the Sun would shine through a natural rock formation on the mountain known as *la Fenetre* and open up a portal that would transport him to another world. He solemnly packed his bags and set out under the cover of darkness, two days in advance, hoping to hide out on the mountain until the blissful moment of transfiguration arrived. Some 24 hours later, the police found him skulking in a spider-infested cave just below the summit and unceremoniously frogmarched him back to the village. Ludovic seemed to lose interest in the angels after that and made tracks, allegedly to attend a rave in another district, having apparently had a bellyful of the Apocalypse.

No sooner had Ludovic departed than another, equally strange, individual sprang up to take his place – a beaming, bearded freak named Sylvain whom we nicknamed the 'magic hippy'. He seemed to appear out of nowhere but, in all likelihood, had been smuggled in by the press who, by now, were prepared to go to any lengths to get a story. The 'magic hippy' happily obliged, regaling CNN and the assembled media with a cock and bull story about a spaceship being on its way towards the mountain piloted by none other than the Blessed Virgin Mary Herself. While his gnomic statements sounded a little scripted, Sylvain apparently did have a genuine cult following and we heard afterwards that his adherents in the neighbouring village of Sougraine had turned against him as a result, accusing him of "selling out" and making them "look crazy".

By dawn on the day of the Apocalypse the only person in the zone even vaguely resembling an End-of-the-Worlder was a confused conspiracy theorist from Esperaza named Ian. Ian couldn't make up his mind

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PATRICK AVENTURIER / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: Sylvain, the 'magic hippy', plays his panpipes for the cameras, while French paramilitaries ensure that caves around Bugarach are free of crazed cultists.

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whether it was really the End or not but had brought an inflatable dinghy with him just in case. It wasn't much of a story but the frustrated journalists were desperate for anything they could get, and accordingly he rapidly found himself on the front page of the *Guardian*.

As the Sun swung past its zenith and a sullen drizzle set in, it became apparent the End of the World was a wash. At the moment of the Solstice itself, the only people on the mountain were two photographers and three exhausted journalists with damp socks.

Perhaps unsurprisingly there were no angels or aliens to be found, nor did the BVM put in an appearance. The psychoactive virus had run its course and the only thing left to do was break out the beers. Although parties had been specifically forbidden in the zone, the police no longer had their hearts in it, and by dusk the throb of music was rising from a dozen not-so-secret locations. Lights began to flicker on the mountain – probably more of the luminous Frisbees that one of the Belgian film-makers had smuggled in to liven up the occasion. A pale, white light came from the summit and there was a sudden, brighter pinkish glow, probably a distress flare, but no one seemed to care any more.

Out in the night, beyond the cordons, word was already spreading among the 'planet people' that the End had been postponed until the Spring Equinox, or possibly the Summer Solstice when conditions would be more conducive for climbing the mountain. Stories were circulating on the Net that the military intervention had been a ploy to conduct a secret survey of the caverns beneath the peak (believed by many to house a subterranean UFO base) and, typically, to "cover up the real truth".

Jean Pierre Delord watched forlornly as the military struck camp. Someone would have to carry the can for the largest, and surely most pointless, policing exercise the Languedoc had ever seen, a resounding non-event that cost the French taxpayer hundreds of thousands of Euros. Judging by the look on his face he already knew his ass was in the sling and his position as mayor rendered effectively untenable. Gazing out over the aftermath of the failed Apocalypse and coming to terms with the prospect of humanity's continued tenure on this Earth, Delord uttered three words that summed up the whole portentious affair: "Now we're f****d!" FT

SANDER VAN ERK

OPPOSITE: Conspiracy theorist Ian and his dinghy. **TOP:** Selling the End of the World. **ABOVE:** Darth Vader crosses the police lines. **RIGHT:** Bugarach's mayor contemplates the failed apocalypse.

RICHARD STANLEY

1 *Susie Harrison's Bugarach blog – 'Countdown to the End of the World' – can be found at http://susiewoo.weebly.com/bugarach-blog.html*

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SUSIE HARRISON

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Carlo saving the Captains Son.

London, Publish'd Sep.r 1804, by Tabart & Co.

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Doggy Dramas

JAN BONDESON celebrates the career of Carlo the acting Newfoundland dog and other celebrated canine thespians of the Victorian stage

Now Attic wit's o'ercome by Gothic rage,
And authors *throw cold water* on the stage;
While, honest *Carlo*, envying even you,
They make their very dramas *Dog*-grel too.
Times, 6 Dec 1803

In late 1803, the playwright Frederick Reynolds presented his latest script to the manager of the Drury Lane Theatre. In a Hispanic setting, the tyrant Don Gomez Muneral falls in love with the beautiful Marchioness of Calatrava. He has the Marquis arrested on a trumped-up charge, and conveyed to prison in a caravan, guarded by the driver Blabbo and his large dog Carlo. Although the Governor threatens the Marchioness that unless she succumbs to his advances her husband will be transported to Mexico or starved to death on his journey in the caravan, the virtuous lady is obdurate. When she and her young son catch up with the caravan, she is relieved to find out that although Blabbo had orders to starve the Marquis on his journey, he has actually

allowed the hungry nobleman to share the dog's food. But Don Gomez turns up too, as obnoxious as ever: unless the Marchioness proves more accommodating, he will blow up her husband aboard ship. When the lady again rejects him, he orders a soldier to throw her son into the sea from a precipice – but the dog Carlo plunges into the water and saves the drowning child. In the end, Don Gomez is deposed, the Marquis liberated, and Blabbo and his dog rewarded.

"I have never heard such nonsense in my life!" you would have expected the manager to exclaim after hearing this absurd plot; instead, his response seems to have been: "This will surely be an enormous hit!" Actors were recruited, suitable music written, and carpenters set to work constructing a precipice and an artificial lake on stage for the play's most dramatic scene. A large Newfoundland dog was purchased, renamed 'Carlo', and given a crash course in acting.

When *The Caravan, or the Driver and his Dog*, opened on 5 December 1803, the reviews were favourable. It was considered novel to have a canine actor as one of the principal performers, and little less than a masterstroke of modern scenography to present a precipice and artificial lake on stage. In particular, Carlo's intrepid leap was much admired by a reviewer in the *Theatrical Journal*: "At this crisis, when every bosom sympathises with the pangs of maternal agony, the voice of the Caravan Driver is heard vociferating 'Carlo! Carlo!' A fine Newfoundland dog rushes forward, leaps from the rock, seizes the infant, and brings it safely to land!" The *Morning Chronicle* struck a more ribald note, the journalist observing that the acting dog's onstage behaviour had been rowdy: "We are extremely unwilling to touch upon the private foibles of the theatrical *corps*, when

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Tom Hickathrift and the Giants a new Growle Drama with Wittington and his Cat
a Burletta
in which a rat Cat and Mice will be introduced
Due Notice will be given of Mr Carlo's next Performance
CARLO

ABOVE: A fine caricature of Carlo the Acting Dog helping Sheridan select his next 'Growley Drama'. **BELOW:** Carlo performs an amazing on-stage rescue.

they do not interfere with their professional engagements, but we are compelled to observe, that on Monday night's performance Mr *Carlo* was evidently *in liquor*!" It was no coincidence that the artificial lake was so very full, he continued, since Mr Carlo had also given the stagehands a *lift* filling it up!

The acting dog remained a controversial member of the cast, since he frequently improvised on stage. Once, he pushed the Marquis over and reclaimed the dog food he was supposed to share; on another occasion, he prevented the throwing of the child by obstructing the soldier. Sometimes, the audience distracted him with their shouts of "Carlo! Carlo! Carlo!" and made him jump about and bark excitedly; at other times, when the acting dog was bored, he lay down on stage and would not move a muscle.
The *Times* published an amusing review of Carlo's latest performance: "In the 'Caravan'

ONCE, HE PUSHED THE MARQUIS OVER AND RECLAIMED THE DOG FOOD HE WAS SUPPOSED TO SHARE

Carlo gave signs of much confidence and improvement. He seems familiarized to the audience, and as proof of it, he lay down on the stage during the greatest part of his principal scene. In the finale, at the end of the first act, he made atonement; for, instead of modestly confining himself, as formerly, to a timely and occasional howl, he assumed the principal part of the chorus, and barked away highly to the entertainment of the audience, and not a little to the amusement of the performers, who were convulsed with laughter. We cannot withhold him the justice due to his merit, in saying that he took the leap with gallant and desperate resolution."

Children's author Eliza Fenwick was one of the many Londoners to see *The Caravan*. By this time, Carlo's onstage exploits had made him a favourite among the children, and Eliza Fenwick was amazed to see many little boys and girls sitting in the front row of the boxes applauding Carlo with the greatest enthusiasm. She was clever enough to exploit the situation: in 1804, her little book *The Life of the Famous Dog Carlo* was published for a juvenile audience. Carlo had been so impressed by the "rapturous exclamations" of the hundreds of young gentlemen and young ladies who had come to see him act, she explained, that the dog had seen fit to compose his autobiography. Carlo's fictional life story was dramatic indeed: he saved people from drowning, dropped an angry little dog into the water after it had annoyed him, and dragged a young boy who had stolen half a roast goose in front of the Lord Mayor of London to make him confess the theft.

In 1806, Carlo went on tour, but the next year he was back in London, acting in another play. In 1808, an actor named Munden tried to recruit Carlo to play the role of the dog Crab in Mr Kemble's revision of *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, but the acting dog had other engagements at the time. Instead, Munden brought with him on stage another Newfoundland dog, named 'Caesar', but this dog misbehaved himself throughout. In the scene where the dog was roughly handled, the large Newfoundland, "not understanding *making belief* in such matters, seized his assailant by the leg." Nothing more was heard

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of Caesar after this short but violent acting career, but Carlo himself is said to have been alive and well, and still acting, when his biography was reissued in 1809. The last notice of this extraordinary dog is that he appeared in *The Forty Thieves* at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, in May 1811.

CARLO'S ONSTAGE FOLLOWERS

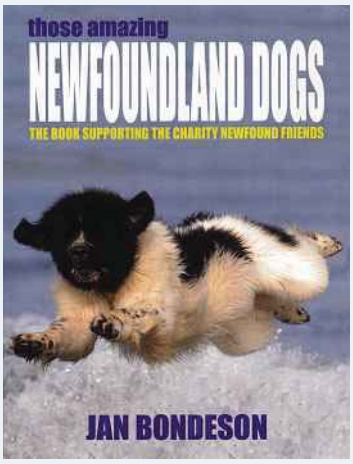
The great success of Carlo the Acting Dog set playwrights and theatrical managers thinking. In spite of possessing neither discipline nor any discernable acting skills, Carlo had established himself as a canine superstar. Newfoundland dogs were highly thought of at the time, admired for their great strength and handsome looks. These fashionable dogs were also intelligent and easy to train, and large enough to fight villains, dive into lakes, and rescue people. Now what if a clever young Newfoundland dog was given acting lessons from an early age, and was made accustomed to the clamouring of the audience? And what if a play was deliberately written for the dog?

Not long after Carlo had retired from the theatre, an actor named Bush trained another Newfoundland dog to become his successor. In early 1817, the Dog Bruin acted in *The Viceroy, or the Spanish Gypsey and the Assassin*, saving a child from a burning castle. According to the *Morning Chronicle*, "the actions of the Dog Bruin almost exceed credibility". In 1819, he acted in a piece entitled *The Gipsy*, which concluded with the hunting of a wild boar. It was an ambitious production, with guns being fired, horses ridden across the stage, and the appearance of a pack of hunting dogs, led by Bruin. After several successful performances, disaster struck one evening when the powerful Bruin decided to improve on the plot. Breaking free from the huntsmen, he darted after the actor representing the wild boar. The fearful actor jumped into the orchestra pit, but Bruin leapt after him and seized hold of the wild boar costume. According to a newspaper review: "The terrified musicians fled, leaving the two champions in possession of the field. The most indescribable confusion prevailed throughout the theatre. The other dogs on stage encouraged their comrade with all the power of their lungs. The uproar was terrible, and the intrepid dog was separated from his prey with no little difficulty."

The celebrated canine drama *The Dog of Montargis* introduced the trick of 'taking the seize', in which the acting dog leaps up onto the villain and seizes him by the throat. The actor playing the villain had to wear protective padding round his neck, and yell "Take off the dog!" once he was brought down. With its racy plot and exciting fight scenes, the play would remain a staple item of dog drama for decades to come. In spite of this, it did not always come off as planned; it is recorded that, once, the friendly acting dog stood watching the audience and wagging his tail, instead of 'taking the seize'. The furious villain desperately tried to

NEWFOUND FRIENDS

The Newfoundland dog is one of the most majestic and impressive breeds. Originally bred as water dogs and draught dogs, Newfoundlands have been known in Britain at least since the 1730s. Considered a superior breed, they soon became expensive and sought after. But Newfoundland dogs were also highly regarded for their ability to save human lives during shipwrecks or bathing accidents. Heroic Newfoundlands were depicted in schoolbooks, in popular engravings and in books on natural history. They were considered not just brave and altruistic, but also extremely intelligent; a large proportion of the anecdotes of dogs told by the Victorian dog-fanciers were related to the extraordinary sagacity of the Newfoundland. From Georgian and Victorian times, there are many true stories of brave Newfoundland dogs leaping to the rescue of some person struggling in the water, sometimes after being ordered to do so, at other times spontaneously. There are also several accounts of Newfoundland dogs taking a rope ashore from a ship or bringing one from shore to a stricken vessel.



The charity Newfound Friends, founded by David Pugh in 1990 and based in Clapton In Gordano outside Bristol, has successfully used the water rescue skills of the Newfoundland dog to raise money for children's charities. Newfound Friends have become a firm favourite at many maritime festivals throughout the UK, and have raised over a million pounds. People find it amazing to see these 13-stone (83kg) dogs leap into the water from a jetty or a dinghy travelling at speed. Apart from David Pugh himself, the leading light of Newfound Friends has been the eight-year-old, 13-stone white-and-black Newfoundland Whizz. He might not have the looks of David Hasselhoff or Pamela Anderson, but this remarkably intelligent dog is the ultimate four-legged lifeguard. Whereas the pampered Baywatch actors would probably have objected to leaping into the freezing cold water and towing a drowning person to safety, this is just another day's work for Whizz, who is probably Britain's finest professional water rescue dog. Once, when going for a walk near Clevedon, Whizz darted off into the bushes, to save an Irish setter named Topper, who had fallen into a disused water tank. Whizz plunged into the tank, resolutely grabbed Topper by the scruff of his neck, and pulled him to safety.

In contrast to circus dogs performing tricks or Pudsey the Dancing Dog, Whizz and the other water rescue dogs of Newfound Friends perform an activity that is wholly natural for their breed. If you get an opportunity to see these amazing dogs show off their skills, you should take it – and, if you can, please support this valuable charity, which is in need of funds in these uncharitable times.

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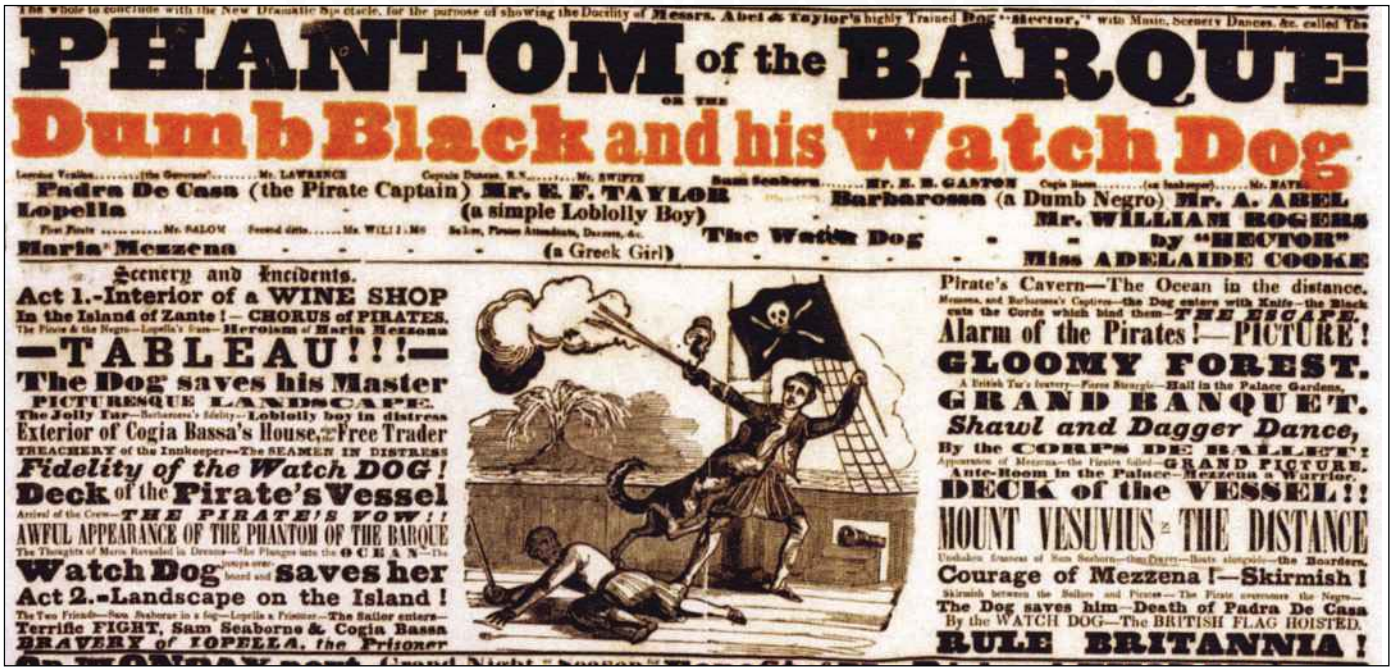
PHANTOM of the BARQUE
OR THE
Dumb Black and his Watch Dog
Padra De Casa (the Pirate Captain) Mr. E. F. TAYLOR
Lopella (a simple Loblolly Boy)
Barbarossa (a Dumb Negro) Mr. A. ABEL
Mr. WILLIAM ROGERS
by "HECTOR"
Maria Mezzena (a Greek Girl)
The Watch Dog
Miss ADELAIDE COOKE
Scenery and Incidents.
Act 1.-Interior of a WINE SHOP
In the Island of Zante! — CHORUS of PIRATES.
—TABLEAU!!!—
The Dog saves his Master
PICTURESQUE LANDSCAPE.
Exterior of Cogia Bassa's House, Free Trader
Fidelity of the Watch DOG!
Deck of the Pirate's Vessel
AWFUL APPEARANCE OF THE PHANTOM OF THE BARQUE
Watch Dog saves her
Act 2.-Landscape on the Island!
Terrific FIGHT, Sam Seaborne & Cogia Bassa
BRAVERY of IOPELLA, the Prisoner
Pirate's Cavern—The Ocean in the distance.
Alarm of the Pirates!—PICTURE!
GLOOMY FOREST.
GRAND BANQUET.
Shawl and Dagger Dance,
By the CORPS DE BALLET!
GRAND PICTURE.
DECK of the VESSEL!!
MOUNT VESUVIUS IN THE DISTANCE
Courage of Mezzena!—Skirmish!
The Dog saves him—Death of Padra De Casa
By the WATCH DOG—The BRITISH FLAG HOISTED.
RULE BRITANNIA!

ABOVE: An astonishingly titled dog drama of the Victorian stage . **BELOW:** "Quick, Bruin, carry that burning torch away from the gunpowder store!" "Woof!"

induce him to attack; in the end, he had to fly at the placid dog himself and lift the animal up to his throat.

A few years after the original Dog Bruin had retired from the stage, he was succeeded by a namesake, another Newfoundland. Along with his master, an impecunious young actor named Wood, Bruin II acted in *The Dog of Montargis* and other plays at the Warwick and Drury Lane theatres. Sometimes, it was useful to have an acting dog around. In March 1828, a poor woman, who made a precarious living selling watercress, walked along the floating timbers near Searle's boathouse in Lambeth, and plunged headlong into Thames. Fortunately, as the *Times* expressed it, "Wood, the owner of the famous dog of Montargis, was close at hand bathing his favourite". Regarding the situation as an unscheduled rehearsal, Bruin jumped in after the woman and dragged her to shore. When she stood up and threatened to jump back into the river, the acting dog practised 'taking the seize'. When the suicidal woman was taken to a public house nearby, the servant girl fainted dead away. She was later reproached for her 'hysteria', but it turned out that "she had a more afflicting cause – the watercress woman was her own mother."

In 1830, Sir Walter Scott's *The Talisman* was adapted for the stage as *Knights of the Cross, or the Dog of the Blood-Stained Banner*, with major parts for Wood and Bruin. Going through his entire acting repertoire, Bruin saves Edith Plantagenet from drowning, brings food and drink to a chained prisoner, discovers a thief, and kills a wicked Emir of the Desert. When the dog is ordered to guard the English Standard, a French traitor, played by Wood himself, sneaks up to steal it. The noble Bruin 'takes the seize' and pulls him to the ground, but only to be stabbed by the Frenchman's vassals. There was not a dry eye in the house when the brave dog fell lifeless to the ground, but much cheering when Bruin leapt up after playing dead to join his fellow thespians in taking their bows.

BRUIN SAVES EDITH PLANTAGENET FROM DROWNING AND BRINGS FOOD AND DRINK TO A PRISONER

Wood appears to have been the first person to realise that there was one thing better than keeping an acting dog – namely to possess *two* of these animals. In 1830, he procured another Newfoundland, named Hector. The two dogs got on well together, and had several plays written for them, like *The Foul Anchor* and *The Cherokee Chief*. The last mention of Wood and his dogs dates from October 1831 when Hector played in *The Dog of Montargis* at the Royal Pavilion Theatre.

Old actors, and acting dogs, do not die; they merely fade away. Although we will hear no more from Wood, it seems that his two dogs started another career under new management. In May 1833, a performance of *The Cherokee Chief, or the Dogs of the Wreck*, featured the young actor Barkham Cony and his two dogs Hector and Bruin. Although a newspaper review praises Cony "for the very extraordinary degree of docility and intelligence to which he has brought his favourite animals" there is good reason to suspect that Cony had purchased Wood's dogs, particularly since the drama was one the dogs were already adept at acting in.

Cony soon joined forces with the young American actor Edwin Blanchard. This amusing character specialised in low comedy, sometimes playing the role of an orang-utan dressed in a specially manufactured suit. However, Cony's success with Hector and Bruin convinced Blanchard that dogs paid better than apes, and the two actors would remain inseparable for many years. In 1836, Cony and Blanchard crossed the Atlantic with their dogs. Whether Hector and Bruin were still the original performers is anybody's guess, but their performance in *The Dog of Montargis* at the Bowery Theatre in New York was a huge success. The Americans had never seen acting dogs like these two massive but sagacious Newfoundlands, and Cony soon became known as 'The Dog Star'. He usually played the villain, and was particularly adept

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Sailors & Savages,
OR THE
RIVAL DOGS!
CARLO & LION will exhibit their astonishing sagacity
Pattaparo, (the treacherous Indian) Mr. H. SIMPSON.

ABOVE LEFT: A Treacherous Indian receives his comeuppance at the paws of two acting dogs. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Mr Cony as Landri, being attacked by his acting Newfoundland.

in finding novel ways for the dogs to put an end to his career, by drowning or suffocating him, pushing him down a precipice, shooting him with a pistol held in the dog's mouth, or discharging a hidden explosive device. In *The Dog of Montargis*, Cony played the role of the villain Landri, introducing a new high point in dog drama when the agile Hector made a great leap to knock him from the saddle of his horse. He used protective padding underneath his clothes to lessen the bruising when the dogs grasped him with their powerful jaws.

THE END OF THE DOG DRAMAS

Victorian dog drama was entirely unhindered by political correctness. A blind or deaf-mute character was considered quite hilarious, as was a clownish black servant or a simpleton labouring under some unfortunate speech impediment. In the dog drama *The Dumb Black and his Watch Dog*, the intrepid dog is not only stronger but also more intelligent than his pathetic, speechless human sidekick. The Dumb Black gets into trouble again and again, only to be saved by the noble, patient Watch Dog. When the hapless Black is framed for theft, the faithful dog turns detective, discovering evidence that exonerates him.

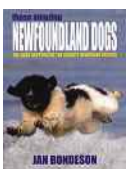
In *The Smuggler's Dog, or the Blind Boy's Murder*, the forceful Smuggler's Dog saves the life of the Blind Boy a number of times, but the sightless lad still keeps bumbling about in a dangerous manner. If there is a fire, a waterfall or an open trapdoor on stage, he heads straight for it. Having been rescued from drowning, fire and a cutlass-wielding pirate, the Blind Boy is finally pushed down a precipice when the dog is busy biting another villain. Still, the Smuggler's Dog witnesses the murder and demands trial by battle, with the inevitable result.

There was a good deal of interest in Native Americans in England at this time. Eschewing the Wild West adage that the only Good Indian is a Dead Indian, the London playwrights instead took the cue from the books of Fenimore Cooper: there were Good Indians, and then there were Bad Indians. The Good Indians were noble savages with names like 'Wonga' or 'Eagle-Eye', usually the last of their tribe, and accompanied by a 'funny' blind or dumb simpleton… and a large dog. The Bad Indians had names like 'Rattlesnake' or 'Black Vulture', lurid designs on white women, a firm dislike for dogs, and a propensity to throw simpletons into the water from high precipices.

There were no canine actresses: the acting dogs were all male, with martial-sounding names like Hector, Victor, Lion or Neptune. The majority were either purebred Newfoundlands or Newfoundland crosses: large, imposing animals capable of holding their own in the frequent fight scenes. One would have thought some enterprising manager would have pitted the acting dogs against each other: both the hero and the villain could be accompanied by Newfoundlands, one a noble and upright animal, the other a veritable Cujo. The drama would end with both the human and canine actors settling their various scores in a grand fight scene. This idea was never put into effect, however; in Victorian melodrama, the acting dogs were uniformly good, loyal and faithful, and more heroic than the play's human star.

As for Cony and Blanchard, they remained in London until 1844, acting in *The Knights of the Cross*, *The Smuggler's Dog* and *The Dumb Slave*. Blanchard made a burlesque contribution in *The Orang Outang and his Double, or the Runaway Monkey*. In 1845 and 1846, they were back at the Bowery in New York. Dog drama was at its height, and the New Yorkers' delight in seeing canine actors on stage even led to some old plays being revised to accommodate canine performers: *Jack Sheppard, and His Dog*, *Dick Turpin, and His Dog* and even *Caspar Hauser, the Blind Boy of Germany, and His Dog* were all more successful than the dog-less original versions.

When performing in New York in 1851, Cony and Blanchard had an angry quarrel and the two 'Dog Stars' parted company for good. They remained in town, trying their best to put each other out of business. Blanchard was acting at the National with the dogs Hector and Bruin, whereas Cony was at the Bowery with his son Eugene Cony and a dog called Yankee. Although some purists complained that two of New York's major theatres had been turned into kennels, there was enough interest from dog-loving theatregoers to make both outfits prosper. Cony and Blanchard were to remain enemies and competitors until Cony's premature death in 1858. Young Eugene Cony tried to carry on his father's life work, but without much success. Blanchard, a more established name, remained a force to be reckoned with in New York show business until the 1870s. By this time, his main rival was the actress Fanny Herring, who performed with her dogs Lafayette and Thunder, in plays like *The Rag Woman and Her Dogs*. Although classics like *The Dog of Montargis* and *The Smuggler's Dog* received an occasional airing as late as the 1880s, the enthusiasm for dog drama had all but ended by that time and the traditional Victorian melodrama continued without canine actors. FT



This is an edited extract from *Those Amazing Newfoundland Dogs* (CFZ Press 2012), which aims to resurrect the forgotten history of the Newfoundland dog and shed new light on this magnificent breed. *FT* readers can purchase the book at the special price of £12.50 (and support Newfound Friends) at http://cfzoffers.blogspot.co.uk/

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DR DINGWALL'S CASEBOOK

PART TWO: 'DIRTY DING'

Eric John Dingwall, author, anthropologist, librarian and psychic investigator, was also known by some as the 'British Kinsey' due to his interest in the nature of sex. It was an interest, though, that brought him into conflict with his fellow psychical researchers, says CHRISTOPHER JOSIFFE.

Eric Dingwall had long been a source of some dismay amongst his colleagues at the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) on account of his interest in the peculiarities of human behaviour, particularly in the realm of sex. It was even said that he had aroused the displeasure of his SPR colleagues by displaying a curiosity about their own sex lives. Although it is unclear exactly why the Society refused to renew his Research Officer status in 1927, one suggestion is that "certain of Dingwall's publications (those on sexual subjects) had not been altogether agreeable to some members of the Council." [1] But his interest in this area was a serious one; just as he had regarded some mediums as being psychologically abnormal, Dingwall argued for a connection between mediumistic ability and a strong sexual drive.

Thus, in one chapter of his 1950 book *Very Peculiar People*, he looked at the Italian medium Eusapia Palladino, who had been examined by SPR representatives in Naples in 1908. Dingwall commented that she was "an unlettered peasant, retaining, as one writer put it, 'a most primitive mentality,' and of such a decidedly erotic nature that it was said that she thought of little else." [2] Apparently, before her sittings, Palladino's pulse rate increased to 120, and her facial expressions "sometimes took on a demoniacal mien", but then changed into an expression "which could only be described as one of voluptuous ecstasy, and which was often accompanied by movements and a brilliance of eye and smile of contentment which must have been singularly disconcerting to diffident sitters... after sittings... she would sometimes, in a half-dreamy state, throw herself into the arms of men attending the séance and signify her desire for more intimate contacts in ways which could hardly be misinterpreted." [3]

MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY / HARRY PRICE

LEFT: Dr Crandon and his wife Mina, the 'Margery' of Dingwall's mediumship case.

ONE OF DINGWALL'S CASES SAW THE MEDIUM DIVESTING HERSELF OF HER OUTER CLOTHING

Dingwall seemed to derive some wry amusement at the thought of Palladino, the earthy Neapolitan peasant, coming into contact with the unworldly and donnish SPR investigators. Palladino was one of a very few mediums whose performances, Dingwall felt, could not be dismissed as fraud or deception, others being Daniel Dunglas Home, and – initially – Willi Schneider (see **FT299:44-49**).

THE 'MARGERY' AFFAIR

One of Dingwall's own cases – that of the 'Margery mediumship' – saw the medium divesting herself of her outer clothing, and appearing in "a thick woollen bath-robe and stockings." One of the most striking aspects of the Margery sittings was the medium's apparent ability to produce a 'telesplasmic' hand-like form from various parts of her body, including – allegedly – her vagina. Perhaps this case appealed to Dingwall not just as an example of 'physical' mediumship but also because of its somewhat bizarre sexual aspects.

Mina Crandon, the wife of a Boston physician and socialite, used the pseudonym 'Margery' and claimed that she was in regular contact with her dead brother Walter. Her séances became highly popular amongst Boston's high society on account of the astonishing manifestations: direct voice, apports, ectoplasm, telekinesis. The voice, supposedly that of Walter, seemed to emanate from somewhere behind Mina, sometimes appearing to come

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from a weird disembodied hand which she materialised, claiming it was that of her dead brother.

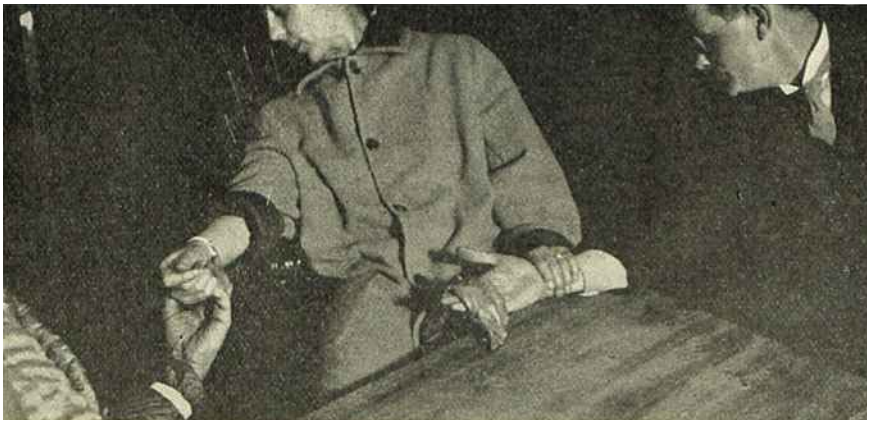
In 1923, she visited Europe and gave a sitting at the SPR for Dingwall. He was impressed by what appeared to be the levitation of a (supposedly) fraud-proof table, and described the phenomena as "very striking and, if fraudulent, involved some skill in performance". [4]

Dingwall attended further sittings in Boston in 1926, where phenomena included raps and knocks; lights; scents; sounds of musical instruments; trance-writing in nine languages; furniture moving around; apports of roses and of a live pigeon; the voice of 'Walter'; appearance of teleplasm; and telekinesis of objects, moved by the teleplasmic 'hand.' This 'hand' can be seen in some of the photographs from the sittings, which were taken under red light. One of the Crandons' conditions was that the lights not be switched on by any of the investigators unless 'Walter' had given permission; another was that during the series of 29 sittings, after each session, the investigators' notes be passed to Mina's husband Dr Crandon. Still another stipulation was that Dr Crandon could be involved in the physical 'control' of his wife's hands and feet; thus, Dingwall writes that "the control varied throughout the sitting; sometimes I had Margery's left hand and both feet, sometimes both hands and both feet, or again both hands and one foot". [5]

Dingwall was criticised by some in the SPR for having acceded to the Crandons' demands; but he noted that: "In accepting these conditions I was fully aware of their shortcomings and of the criticisms which could so easily be levelled against them. But it seemed better to accept what was offered than to commence the series by objections and refusals." [6] He argued that had he insisted on the séances being conducted on his own terms, there would have been no sittings – or, instead, sittings but no phenomena. Dingwall's report on the séances presents two hypotheses – the first being that the sittings presented some genuinely "supernormal" phenomena, and the second that trickery was involved. He seemed to vacillate between the two positions, and 'Walter' himself, during one séance, remarked that "Dingwall is sitting on the fence waiting to see which way to jump. Unfortunately, however, for Dingwall, the fence is rotten, and he is going to get a nasty spill." [7]

The teleplasmic hand is arguably the most bizarre aspect of the 'Margery' sittings, whether genuine or faked. Here are some of Dingwall's notes from sitting number seven:

In 10 minutes rustling in Psyche's [i.e. Margery's] lap. Thought a mass of substance was in Psyche's lap. Walter then directed my palm to be put up on middle of table, near the edge. Then for five minutes – palm struck by cool, clammy apparently disc-like object; on repeated flicks being given to my hand. I noticed that the shape of the object was constantly changing. It appeared to lengthen and to widen, and occasionally parts appeared to be thickened, as if some internal mechanism was causing a swelling in parts of the mass. At times two distinct pressures at least were felt, the sensation being as if crude, clammy, unformed fingers were pressing both the lower portions of my fingers, and also the upper at the same time. This pressure was sometimes increased to 2½-3 pounds, and when the substance was drawn from the hand it always appeared to be slightly viscous. [8]



MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY / SPR

TOP: Margery, with her hands clasped by her controls, appears to extrude ectoplasm through her navel. **ABOVE:** In another session, Dingwall is clearly visible, with the ectoplasmic 'hand' resting on his own.

Elsewhere, in Dingwall's report on the sixth sitting – where he witnessed the disembodied hand-like form with its "large, clumsy fingers" and felt once again the "cold, viscous, clammy material" touch his hand – he posits the validity of the first or "supernormal" hypothesis. He compared the teleplasmic substance to similar matter ostensibly produced by other mediums – Kathleen Goligher, Eva Carrière, and, most notably, the "rude, claw-like terminals" observed in Willi Schneider's séances. But, adopting the second hypothesis, Dingwall insists that "we have no right to assume that all these appearances [i.e. of 'Walter's' clammy hand] *were the same object.*" [9] Given that the Crandons had not been intimately searched, it was possible that either or both had brought certain objects into the room. The inference was that Margery had concealed the substance or substances internally. Another of the observers, Professor William McDougall, noted that the teleplasmic 'hand' closely resembled animal lung tissue.

Dingwall concluded that the Margery case was unlike those of Willi Schneider or Eusapia Palladino. Of these latter two, he wrote: "I cannot conceive *any* normal explanation for what has been observed; and it is precisely for that reason that in these two cases I adopt the first hypothesis." [10] With regard to the Margery affair, since it

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LEFT: Eric Arthur Wildman of Walthamstow, whose extensive archive of material relating to corporal punishment ended up in Dingwall's care at the British Library. **BELOW:** An illustration from Dingwall's 1923 book *The Girdle of Chastity*.

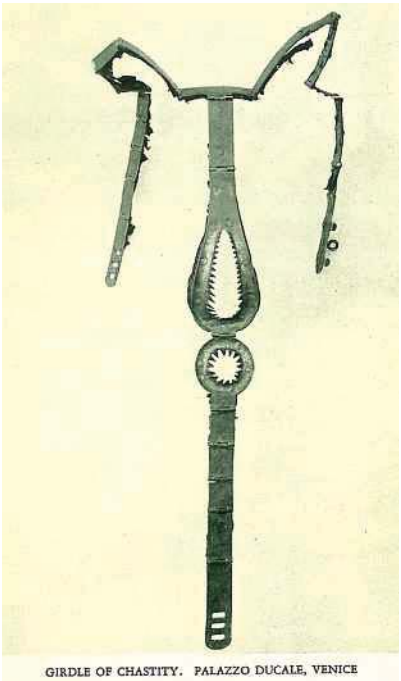
was possible that normal means had been employed to simulate the phenomena, he was inclined towards the second hypothesis. This was not the same as saying that the Crandons had been caught out using trickery; merely, that their refusal to undergo stricter controls meant that imposture was impossible to rule out. As for motive, Dingwall remained puzzled, suggesting only that Dr Crandon, as a man of science, might have wished to discredit Spiritualism by faking the phenomena over a period of time. But if this were the motive, Dr Crandon would presumably have revealed the truth at a later date; and he is not known to have done so.

ANTHROPOLOGIST AND COLLECTOR

Partly as a result of his estrangement from the SPR, Dingwall became disenchanted with the whole field of psychic investigation; indeed, towards the end of his life, he often remarked that he wished he had not devoted so much time to the paranormal. It was during this period of disenchantment in the mid-to-late-1920s that he became increasingly interested in anthropology; perhaps finding in this discipline the scientific rigour he felt was lacking in psychical research. To this end, he was enrolled as a PhD student at the University of London between 1925 and 1929. His research during this period led to the publication of several books: *The Girdle of Chastity* (1923), a study of chastity belts and similar devices throughout the ages, *Male Infibulation* (1925, revised edition 1931), and *Artificial Cranial Deformation* (1931). His fascination with these most recondite of subjects is what one would expect of a man whose entry in *Who's Who* referred to his interests as "studying rare and queer customs."

He also had a reputation as a meticulous archivist and cataloguer. His practical guide *How to Use a Large Library* (1933) testified to his expertise in this area. He was also

HIS RESEARCH LED TO THE PUBLICATION OF A STUDY OF CHASTITY BELTS AND SIMILAR DEVICES



GIRDLE OF CHASTITY. PALAZZO DUCALE, VENICE

an avid collector. Alan Gauld of the SPR recollects that Dingwall's Cambridge flat was "so crowded with books, automata, unusual clocks, and other curiosities, that moving about in it required some care." [11] There was certainly an eccentric aspect to Dingwall's personality; witness his collection of screws and scraps of metal, which he had first salvaged from rubbish bins near his flat in Cambridge, and then classified. Gauld recollects: "being taken round the workshop wherein reposed a fine collection of tools, and enormous quantities of nails, screws, nuts, bolts and oddments all stored by size or gauge in nests of labelled drawers" [12] . He was a frequenter of sales and auctions, once purchasing at a sale of garden items a large number of green seed envelopes which he used for several years for his own correspondence.

LIFE DURING WARTIME

Dingwall had married his first wife, Doris Dunn, in 1918; they had met as fellow members of the SPR and lived in suburban respectability at Golders Green. But theirs was a troubled relationship, and by 1933 Doris had taken up with the psychologist and anthropologist John Willoughby Layard – Dingwall refusing to grant her a divorce until some 10 years later. Concealing his emotional anguish beneath jocularity, Dingwall told friends that he "had lost her in the London Underground about 1930 and had not seen her since." [13]

He then spent two years travelling widely. Between 1935 and 1937, he visited Europe, North and South America, and the Caribbean, in further pursuit of those "rare and queer customs". Thus, in September 1936, he was visiting Haiti, apparently to investigate Voodoo, with a special interest in establishing the veracity, or otherwise, of the zombie phenomenon. He also visited Barbados, where he visited the Chase family vault, with its alleged moving coffins.

There is a certain amount of mystery regarding Dingwall's activities during WWII. He was, from 1941 to 1945, attached to the wartime Ministry of Information and to a department of the Foreign Office, but always remained tight-lipped with regard to his activities at both. It has been suggested that he had been involved in propaganda and disinformation. [14] His friend Guy Lyon Playfair has stated that Dingwall had been associated in some unspecified way with Bletchley Park, but whether he worked in decryption, radio interception or another area remains unclear. [15] In his post-war correspondence, Dingwall occasionally referred to 'black ops', without elaboration. In September 1945, he told Price that his "overtime work with the Govt from 1941… is now over and I am on the point of demobilisation," but without explanation as to the nature of that work. [16]

Remarks Dingwall made to his friend Alan Gauld would suggest that he had indeed been (or perhaps still was) involved in intelligence work; during the Cold War, he suggested that the Soviets were experimenting with "telepathic hypnosis for military purposes" and that they had infiltrated the world of US parapsychology

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by inserting their own agents. [17]

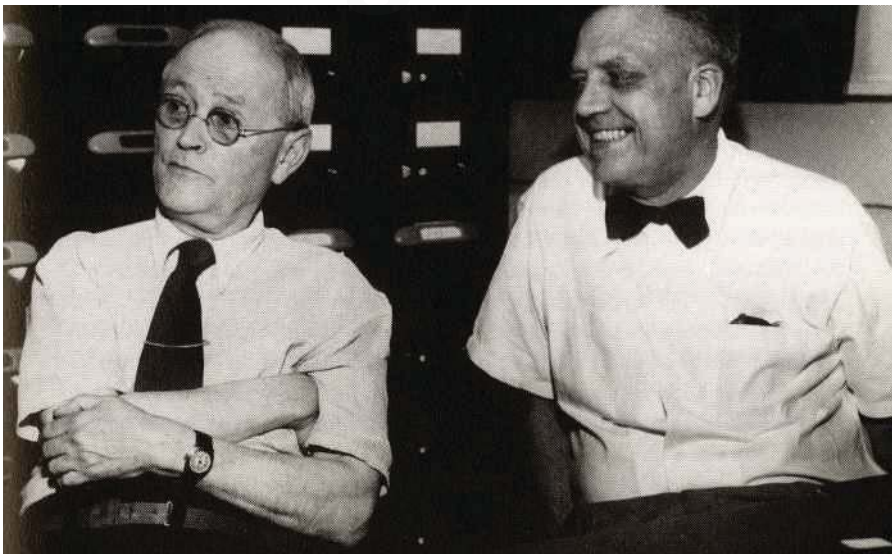
In later life, he took a great interest in the UFO phenomenon, hinting that world powers knew more about the subject than they had hitherto revealed. Apparently unsuccessfully, he had urged his contacts in the Ministry of Defence to establish a department dedicated to the investigation of the paranormal. [18]

'DIRTY DING' AND THE 'PRIVATE CASE'

After the War, Dingwall worked at the Library of the British Museum, joining as a Voluntary Assistant in April 1946 (his considerable wealth meant that he did not have to seek paid employment). Soon, owing to his expertise in library cataloguing, as well as his willingness to purchase rare items for the Museum using his own funds, he was promoted to the position of Honorary Assistant Keeper in the Department of Printed Books. His particular area of specialisation at the Museum was erotica, and, as such, had responsibility for the Museum's 'Private Case' of obscene literature. It is this aspect of his life which gave rise to the unfortunate and unwarranted nickname 'Dirty Ding.'

The origins of the 'Private Case' are a mystery, but it appears to have been created some time in the mid-19th century when it began life as a cupboard in the office of the Keeper of Printed Books. Comprising 27 books in 1850, the collection expanded over the years, so that by 1900 it contained many hundreds. It consisted mostly of erotic material and did not appear in the general catalogue. Readers wishing to consult the material therein were – until the 1960s – subjected to "a cross-examination calculated to deter all but really honest and legitimate research." [19]

It was considerably enlarged in 1900 due to the acquisition of the Ashbee collection.



BRITISH LIBRARY ARCHIVES

ABOVE: Dingwall (left) with the American sexologist Alfred Kinsey. The two became firm friends over the years.

Henry Spencer Ashbee – thought by many (although not by Dingwall) to have been the author of the multi-volume Victorian pornographic *tour de force*, *My Secret Life* – was a great collector of erotica, which was willed to the Museum upon his death in 1900, with over 1,500 books being added to the 'Private Case'. Nevertheless, it is said of Dingwall that he "was more important than anyone else in building up the Private Case." [20] Thus, in 1947, Dingwall donated 44 books, mostly in German, including *Meine grausame süsse Reitpeitsche* ("My sweet cruel whip") and *Das Flagellanternschloss* ("The Castle of the Flagellants"). He also donated some rare and valuable typewritten and carbon-copied notes produced by various German flagellation clubs, as well as some rare French works such as Apollinaire's *Le Verger des Amours*, and *Nini à Lesbos* by Jacques de Linettes. He also donated *Men and Boys*, a history of pederasty in the Classical world, which he had acquired from the collection of the Reverend Alfred Reginald Thorold Winckley. Perhaps the most significant work obtained by Dingwall for the 'Private Case' was a first edition (1749) of John Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (otherwise known as *Fanny Hill*).

Another set of British Library holdings, the Wildman Collection, comprises the publications – periodicals and leaflets – of the *National Society for the Retention of Corporal Punishment in Schools,* and the related *Corpun Educational Association*. [21] These were both essentially front organisations for one Eric Arthur Wildman of Walthamstow. Wildman – who described himself as a supplier of canes to schools – also produced pamphlets such as *Modern Miss Delinquent*, *Punishment Posture for Girls*, *The German Girl: Corporal Punishment in Germany and Austria* and *The Cleansing Cane*.

Long recognised as an expert in matters of abnormal sexuality, Dingwall would sometimes be called upon by Scotland Yard to advise in cases having a bizarre or unusual sex angle. It is understood that the police consulted Dingwall during their investigations into the Profumo scandal. He certainly knew of aspects of the case that had been omitted from Lord Denning's official report. As research for their book *Honeytrap*, investigative journalists Anthony Summers and Stephen Dorril interviewed Dingwall just prior to his death. He told them of a woman named 'Carmen' who provided all manner of sexual services, "covering every conceivable anomaly and perversion" and with "elaborate charades" being provided. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Dingwall explained, "she owned a large country house in Berkshire, catering to people with the money to participate... the front for their activities was that they posed as antique dealers." Summers and Dorril discovered that one of Carmen's customers had been a Conservative Secretary of State. Dingwall confirmed this, saying that

ABOVE: The 'Private Case' of obscene literature at the British Library became the responsibility of 'Dirty Ding'.

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the Minister "used to go down there quite a lot, but I wouldn't imagine he would wish to talk about it. I heard that he favoured a 'babies and nursemaids' scene in which he played the nursemaid." [22] As a result of the police investigation, several influential and wealthy people had their private peccadilloes exposed. David Mountbatten, the third Marquess of Milford Haven, and Beecher Moore, a wealthy expatriate American living in London – both decided that it would be unwise to retain possession of their extensive pornography collections. Accordingly, and presumably in an arrangement brokered by Dingwall, the material was offered to the British Museum's Library. Naturally, much of it ended up in the 'Private Case'. "Items rejected by the Principal Keeper of the Library ("we are the Department of Printed Books... not an institute of sexual research" [23]) were accepted by the Kinsey Institute for Sex Research." (See **FT194:52-53**).

Dingwall and Kinsey had been friends since June 1954, when Dingwall had visited Kinsey's Institute for Sex Research in Bloomington, Indiana, bringing with him an 18th-century sheep's-gut condom, complete with its original wrappers, for the Institute's collection. When Kinsey announced that he was planning a visit to Europe for 1955, Dingwall offered him the use of his house as a base for his week in England, gave him a tour around the British Museum and Library's erotica collections, and took him on a walking tour around London's red-light areas. The two men evidently had a good deal of respect for each other's knowledge of sex research, and for their scientific approach to the subject. Indeed, Dingwall was later to describe Kinsey, after the latter's death in 1957, as " 'one of the greatest men I have ever met'." [24]

FINAL YEARS

In December 1954 Dingwall married a psychologist, Dr Norah Margaret Davis. They both took time off work to attend the registry office and afterwards celebrated with a lunch of kippers. Margaret was, by all accounts, his intellectual equal: "an intelligent and charming woman whose mind was clearly as shrewd as Ding's although she would speak it less stridently". [25] Within a couple of years they moved from Cambridge to East Sussex, at Margaret's suggestion. Their new home, near Crowhurst, had a large garden, and was set in 60 acres of pine forest. Together, they entertained many visitors, and Dingwall, now in his late sixties, was experiencing something of a new lease of life. His devotion to Margaret was obvious, and when, on Christmas Eve 1976, she suddenly and unexpectedly died, Dingwall's desolation was clear to see.

DINGWALL WAS DISTRAUGHT AND HOPING TO FIND EVIDENCE OF POST-DEATH SURVIVAL

LEFT AND BELOW: Two views of Dingwall in old age

It is notable that after Margaret's death, Dingwall, the arch-rationalist and sceptic, experienced several apparently paranormal incidents he found difficult to account for. Distraught, and hoping to find evidence of post-death survival, he attempted to establish contact with Margaret via mediums. At one sitting, several pieces of personal information were provided by a medium, which Dingwall confirmed to be correct. And at the seaside apartment at St Leonard's-on-Sea to which they had moved just prior to Margaret's death, and where the octogenarian Dingwall now resided, odd things took place. An 'apport' in the form of an old Bakelite plug appeared, a household object unfathomably fell off a shelf in the kitchen while Dingwall was washing up, and a clock "behaved very curiously soon after Margaret's death." [26]

Despite his worsening health, Dingwall lived on, alone, for another 10 years. It is a tribute to his scientific detachment and lack of self-pity that, during the final year of his life, he remarked to a friend that he found his own physical deterioration "absolutely fascinating." [27] FT

Christopher Josiffe wishes to thank Guy Lyon Playfair, Jennifer Smith, and the staff of SHL's Historic Collections Reading Room.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

CHRISTOPHER JOSIFFE is a library cataloguer. He is interested in Western magical traditions, Spiritualism and related movements, primordial religion, and folklore. He likes Northern Soul, visiting prehistoric monuments and birdwatching. He is currently writing a biography of Gef, the talking mongoose.

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Once in a Lifetime

What do Frankie Boyle and Thomas Hardy have in common, asks SD TUCKER? Well, apart from their apparent misanthropy, both are the subject of books in which fortean aspects could very easily be missed...

SD TUCKER is a Merseyside-based writer and regular contributor to *FT*. His latest book, *Paranormal Merseyside*, is available now from Amberley Publishing.

Whilst recently flicking through a copy of *My Shit Life So Far*, the best-selling memoirs of the notoriously controversial Scottish comedian Frankie Boyle, I was most surprised to come across an account of a bizarre UFO encounter experienced by the man himself. The sighting took place in the skies above Charing Cross in Glasgow, where Frankie says he saw two metallic orbs hovering above the city centre, seemingly entirely unnoticed by anyone else around him.

In his own words, Boyle was stepping out of a café, when what he calls "a big thing that looked like three interconnected silver balls stopped and hovered maybe 500ft [150m] up in the air" before then being joined, not long afterwards, by another which looked "exactly the same" as the first. Apparently, both objects sat "completely still" in the air for a while before both shooting away together at what is described as "a really ridiculous speed". Boyle, hoping to get another look at the UFOs, ran after the craft in the general direction in which they had disappeared, but did not succeed. His behaviour did not cause much interest (either in himself or the presence of the UFOs) however, as "in Glasgow a running man, looking desperately up into the sky, doesn't attract any attention at all".

Given that Boyle is a comedian, we might perhaps be minded to question whether or not this anecdote was intended as a joke. However, this does not appear to be the case; whilst the author does admittedly use his sighting as a platform to make some disappointingly mild UFO-related gags (including one about the alleged Scottish UFO-hotspot of Bonnybridge and another which seemingly refers to *FT's* very own Dr David Clarke's work on 'Britain's X-Files'), he gives his own view that the silver balls were real, and that they in fact represented some kind of secret military technology along the lines of unmanned drone vehicles.[1]

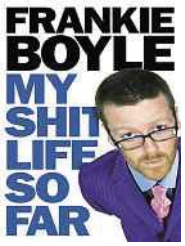
Auberon Waugh writes about witnessing an alien big cat

Needless to say, I was hardly anticipating encountering such a story when I picked up the book. Likewise, I wasn't expecting to come across a similarly fortean tale when I read *The Time-Torn Man*, Claire Tomalin's recent biography of that giant of English literature, Thomas Hardy – and yet there, in an otherwise quite normal account of the young Hardy's daily unaccompanied walk through the Dorset countryside to and from school, was detailed a rather odd thing. One winter, whilst returning home, he began to walk up Stinsford Hill, as he always did. Being winter, it was already dark and, this being the 19th-century countryside, there were no street-lamps to light his way and no farms or other dwellings within sight whose lamps could help alleviate the gloom; and so the lone schoolboy was forced to rely upon nothing other than the moonlight to illuminate his path.

As Hardy made his way up the hill, however, the light from the silvery Moon did allow him to see one most unexpected thing; sitting there, upon either side of the road down which he had to pass, were two men. They were not sitting on the ground, though; bizarrely, each had his own chair. Neither said a word to the other or to Hardy himself, and, as he got closer, the young boy found himself able to make out that neither man was known to him. Terrified by the oddness of this sight, Hardy immediately took to his heels and fled. Apparently, he was never able to find out who the men were, or what they were doing there in the first place. As Tomalin says of the incident: "What makes it sinister is the silence, because on a country road you expect friends and strangers alike to exchange a word as you pass, and their being seated, as though taking part in some arcane ritual."[2]

Probably, there was a logical and non-sinister explanation for such an event, but it is the wholly unexpected and isolated nature of this account within the book as a whole which interests me most here. How many other books, particularly biographies, are there out there, ostensibly entirely unrelated to the subject-matter of *FT*, but which feature, somewhere within them, a single short but interesting account of an encounter with a ghost, say, or a sea-serpent? Probably hundreds.

Somewhere within their own copious writings, for instance, Goethe tells us about seeing his own doppelgänger and Auberon Waugh about witnessing an Alien Big Cat – and yet the only way in which a fortean would be able to come across such tales would be by chance, whilst reading outside their main subject for pleasure. I'd imagine that most people who encounter something fortean do so only once or twice in their entire lives, and that, as such, this basic pattern would be mirrored within many writers' life-stories. Most of these, however, we may never come across. Do *FT* readers know of any other examples? FT



ABOVE: Thomas Hardy and Frankie Boyle. Do the biographies of other figures contain similar unsuspected forteana?

SPICER-SIMSON / HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

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Meteoric messages?

In the wake of Earth's close shave with an asteroid and the meteor impact at Chebarkul, THOMAS N HACKNEY asks why events involving celestial objects like this arrive in paired sequences. Is someone trying to tell us something?

THOMAS N HACKNEY has written for various small magazines in New York and worked in PR. He lives in the West Virginia mountains in a house of his own design and is the author of *The ETi Grail* (Balboa Press, 2012).

Early detection of the 150-ft (46m) -long asteroid named 2012 DA14 provided ample warning of its close shave with Earth on 15 February. Passing from the southern to northern hemisphere, it missed our planet by the closest margin of 17,150 miles (27,600km) of any previous Near-Earth Object (NEO) known since systematic surveys of the sky began in the mid-1990s thanks to comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 and its multi-million megaton impact explosion on Jupiter in July 1994. DA14's minimum distance to Earth was measured at 0.0002276 astronomical units when it passed *beneath* artificial satellites currently in orbit.

So what were the odds of another celestial object, one with a significantly different orbit from that of DA14, breaking another record *that same day*? The Chebarkul meteor exploded flash-bang style near the Siberian city of Chelyabinsk, close to the Khazakstan-Russian border (see p7). It was the largest bolide to belly-flop into the planet's atmosphere since 1908, when a similar bogey, of somewhat larger size, exploded over Tunguska. That explosion not only flattened forests for more than 100 square miles, but it caused the night skies of Europe to glow red for months afterward.

This is the not the first time two major impacts have taken place in apparent sequence. The first time this happened started on the evening of 9 October 1992 – three days before NASA commenced the first serious search for extraterrestrial intelligence. This 10-year, congressionally-funded SETI project, officially dubbed the High Resolution Microwave Survey, boasted more searches for ET signals in one or two minutes than had been done by all the previous 50 or so private SETI projects *combined*.

The first impact – the Peekskill meteor fireball event – was followed five months later by the appearance of comet Shoemaker-Levy 9, aka the "string of pearls" – so called because it consisted of 21 large fragments ranging from a few hundred metres to two kilometres in diameter. One might think that some 'message from the gods' was being sent. Comets, so our ancestors tell us, are auguries of things to come – and the number 21 perhaps contained an allusion to something else that was fast approaching – namely, the 21st century.

The link between these two earlier meteor events was recorded, in embossed steel, on the Peekskill meteor's approximate target – the license plate of a parked 1980 Chevrolet Malibu, of all things – though there was nothing approximate about the impact itself. The numbers appearing on the right half of the license plate, the side pointed up by the pulverised right signal-light of the car, were '933'. Perhaps our cosmically suspicious ancestors would have told us that this surely portended something big about to go down during the third month of 1993. Shoemaker-Levy 9 was discovered by the comet-hunting team of Eugene and Carolyn Shoemaker and David Levy on 24 March that year – and the impact of Jupiter by SL9 was about as big as things get – around here, anyway.

This surely portended something big going down...

BELOW: The meteor exploding over the city of Chelyabinsk, captured by a driver's dashboard video camera.

The six-day barrage of 21 impacting comet 'fragments' on Jupiter (one for each *anno domini* century) in July 1994 was the single most energetic event ever seen in our Solar System. At a few hundred metres in diameter, the smallest of SL9's fragments was several times bigger than 2012 DA14, which was estimated to weigh about 40,000 tonnes. The largest of the comet's impacts was fragment 'G', which created a giant dark spot on Jupiter over 7,500 miles (12,000km) across. Astronomers estimated that it released energy equivalent to 6,000,000 megatons of TNT, or about 600 times the world's entire nuclear arsenal.

So something big *did* go down in 93/3, very much as might have been read between the lines of the Peekskill impact. The meaningful coincidences that link the two earlier record-breaking events did not stop there, however. There were actually dozens of curiously articulated details to note, but my favourite was the fact that the owner of the aforementioned Chevy Malibu, one Michelle Knapp, just happened to celebrate her 18th birthday on 12 October 1992, the bi-momentous date of NASA's quincentennial alien hunt. Then there was the fact that both Peekskill and SL9 were meteor *strings*: Peekskill showed around 70 fragments, as counted on two high resolution photographs, while SL9 consisted of 21, fragments which were denoted A through W (letters I and O were not used).

Because it was the first ever meteor both filmed in the air and recovered, the Peekskill fireball remains the most astronomically resolved terrestrial meteor event in history. A precise flightpath and radiant were derived by a team of scientists using triangulation analysis of the 14 widely-spaced video recordings (in six US states) made available to them. It clearly shows that Washington DC had the very best seat from which to watch the meteoric fly-past at 8 o'clock that October night.

Then there were the words – words that spoke pithy volumes to what NASA was up to on that day; words like 'peek' and 'skill', for example. If aliens did aim a 5in (13cm) wide meteor at this 5in wide target to give us humans a small peek at their skill, then the fact that the

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Ames Research Center just happened to be conducting a Targeted Search for extraterrestrials at the time could be significant, assuming that words have any utility at all. The fact that the Peekskill meteor happened to hit a car's *right* signal-light (not its left), could have spoken volumes to NASA's operating hypothesis, namely: Extraterrestrials exist. To wit: "Right, Ames, your hypothesis [of alien life] is correct."

But there was a warning here, too – a damn serious one, speaking hypothetically, of course. This might be expressed as: "Better survey your own backyard before surveying anyone else's". Indeed, this sounded like pretty good advice to NASA, because very soon afterward the space agency began a mission to visit an asteroid in space for the first time. The NEAR (Near Earth Asteroid Rendezvous) mission launched on 17 February 1996 from Cape Canaveral. After a four-year journey that included fly-bys of asteroid Matilda (June 1997) and Eros (Dec 1998), the car-sized spacecraft began orbiting Eros on 14 February 2000. During the last few minutes of its flight, NEAR-Shoemaker, as the mission was later re-named, snapped 69 high-resolution photographs of Eros from as close as 394ft (120m) before crashing into the asteroid in February 2001.

Needless to say, NASA never admitted that this 'advice' was given to them via possibly intelligent means. From a strictly scientific point of view, the notion of a new comet being subjectively predicted on the license plate of a meteoritically-perforated car could hardly be called scientific. As indicated in several letters and e-mails to the author over the years, NASA-Ames was perfectly content to explain Peekskill and SL9 as natural events. The very idea that these events were "messages" would have seemed utterly ridiculous for any number of sound reasons. For one thing, there was no scientific way to verify whether the hypothesis was true or not. One might try statistics, as all other scientific theories do, but no one seemed interested in the exercise. For another thing, the meteor's parent body was never any farther from Earth than 2.1 A.U. from the Sun, or a bit beyond Mars. How could extraterrestrials exist within a few million miles of us and not have been detected?

They say that in politics there's no such thing as coincidence. The adage might just as well apply to extraterrestrial politics, if we're ready for such a notion. When NASA commenced HRMS on 12 October 1992 – the 500th anniversary of Christopher

Columbus's much famed 'discovery' of the (last) New World – the message or 'coincidental' allusion to hemispheric genocide, cultural domination and all manner of mayhem must have been a bit too much to ignore, completely, anyway. Since ET's opening overture of 9 October 1992 was neither generally perceived nor officially acknowledged, it seems that a smaller yet stepped-up version of the these events was in cosmic order: thus 2012 DA14 and Chebarkul.

Supporting this strange and outlandish interpretation are a substantial number of interesting parallels between the two event sets. First, there was the idea that if either meteoroid, Shoemaker-Levy 9 or DA14, had impacted the Earth, a major catastrophe would have ensued, one with short-term as well as long-term effects. If either asteroid 2012 DA14 or the bolide that closely preceded it had found its way a little lower and closer to Earth, an almost unimaginable tragedy would have resulted. According to scientists, the 7,000-10,000-ton Chebarkul meteor packed about as much explosive energy as several Hiroshima-type bombs, but because the asteroid blast occurred at 18-32 miles (30-50 km) above the Earth, no significant damage was sustained beyond a lot of broken windows and caved-in roofs.

Another curious parallel between Peekskill and Chebarkul was the signature precision shown. According to the Minister of Emergency

TOP: The 1980 Chevrolet Malibu hit by the Peekskill meteor (pictured above).

Situations of Russia, 1,154 people applied for medical assistance following the bolide's explosion, including 289 children. Of these, 52 people were hospitalised, including 13 children. Yet *nobody died*. Most of the injuries were facial cuts from the 200,000 square metres of windows that were shattered by the airburst and from raining debris, although there is some question as to just what some of this debris was. Early rumours in the city were that a missile battery to the south attempted to shoot down the meteor after picking it up on radar. This might have included the S-400 missile, Russia's most advanced, which can track 100 objects simultaneously and shoot down 12 of them. The rumour is reinforced by eyewitnesses who reported hearing two flash-bangs (not just one) 70 seconds apart and of seeing two big contrails at 4,000-5,000ft (1,200-1,500m) about 100 seconds apart. When missiles like this detonate they can rain a large amount of debris and cause serious injury. Indeed, one witness said: "It sounded just like rain coming down."

Another thing to notice is that like Peekskill and SL9, the 15 February events were captured on film by a large number of automated video recorders. Russian insurance companies will often not pay a claim unless there is film taken of an accident, so many truck and car dealers in Russia today equip their latest models with video cameras on the dashboard. For its part, the Peekskill fireball was captured on film by more than 14 videographers in six US states, while Shoemaker-Levy was recorded on film and photographs by too many people and facilities to count. There would be no mistaking by anyone that these "anomolies" happened.

As to what the hypothetical users of the recent meteors might have been saying or doing, this would probably depend on whom one asked. A strong reference to Tunguska was certainly implied, but, beyond this, who can say? Just like Peekskill and SL9, Chebarkul and DA14 were not word-strings with precise meanings decoded from radio-waves in deep space. They were actions, not beeps – and perhaps just a bit more in-your-face than last time around.

When you're in the woods and you hear the distinctive sound of a twig snapping, you don't throw the perception out as anecdotal, subjective or unreplicated. You don't *think* something might be out there, you *know it is* – especially if you're smart enough to realise that compared to the other inhabitants of the forest your human ears are way too short. FT

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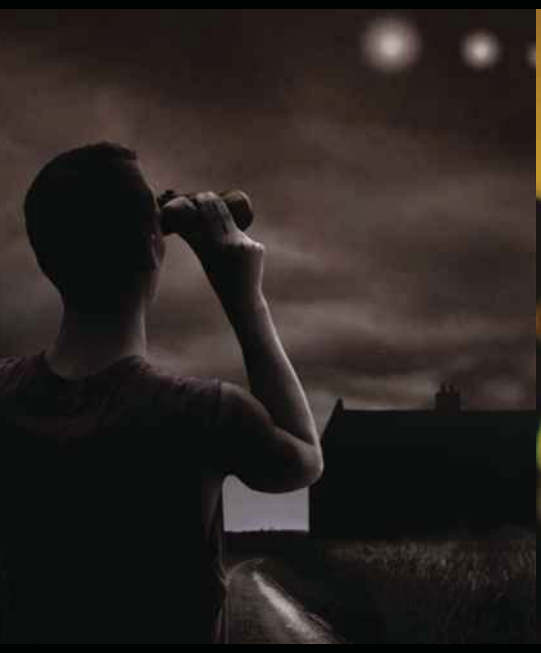

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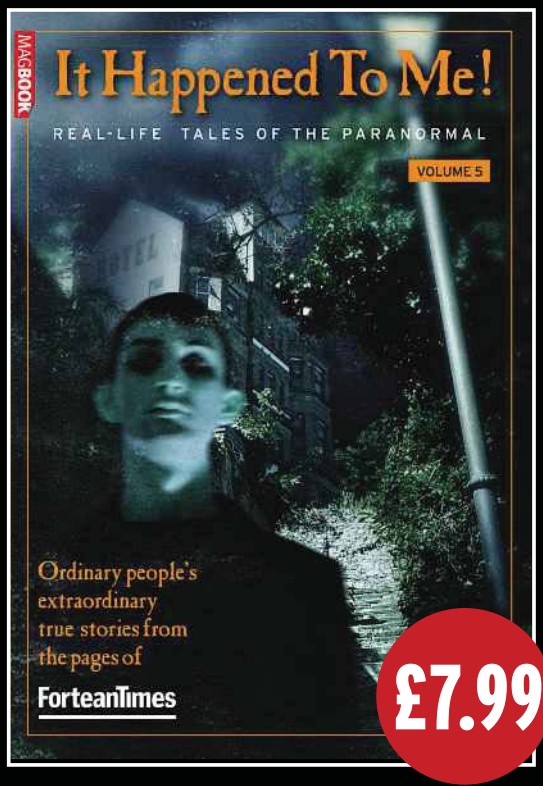

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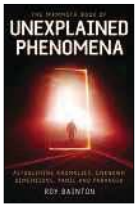
This month's books, films and games

reviews

All hail unknown unknowns

An "agnostic miscreant" introduces Charles Fort's ideas with wit and critical affection, and provides a masterful introduction to forteana's very broad church



The Mammoth Book of Unexplained Phenomena

From Bizarre Biology to Inexplicable Astronomy

Roy Bainton

Robinson 2013

Pb, 596pp, bib, ind, £7.99, ISBN 9781780337951

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The once-constant flow of encyclopædic compilations of forteana has dwindled to a trickle. This might be due in part to publishers' awareness that they have mined out this particular manifestation of the interest in anomalies, but I suspect the ease with which such material can be found online and the trend towards glossy 'coffee-table' books with increasingly bland and recycled content is more likely. Hooray, then, for Roy Bainton!

This fat volume is the latest in the *Mammoth Book of...* series and a welcome return to sensible, balanced analysis, well researched and wide-ranging material, and sheer value-for-money. No fortean writer worth their salt will ever claim to be encyclopædic in the sense of being completist, but then a good fortean writer will draw on the widest possible range of sources, views and topics... and Bainton is a very good writer. His narratives are relaxed and weave deftly through his marshalled facts, citations and interjections. He is a natural storyteller, as you'd expect someone to be who had spent formative years sailing the world in the Merchant Navy followed by a career in journalism.

Many of you will remember his *FT* articles on marine and wartime mysteries; however, this volume shows that there was much more behind Bainton's knowledge and interests than just ghost ships, spies and Nazis. Here, around 150 topics are divided into eight parts, broadly covering philosophical approaches, ufology, dying and the undead, astronomy, biology, panic and paranoia, anomalous archæology, and (of course) marine mysteries.

Bainton's introduction to Fort and forteana is confident and clear. Regarding the human urge to 'explain', he cites Fort's dictum "The fate of all explanations is to close one door only to have another fly wide open". He could have added Fort's extension, that any explanation is only relative to other explanations. Bainton then establishes a 'place to stand' between the credulous and the 'militant skeptics' by referring to Colin Wilson's own interpretation of Fort's principle: that people with a psychological need to believe in marvels are no less prejudiced and gullible than people with a psychological need to disbelieve in or explain away marvels. Bainton notes that this philosophical balancing act was echoed, metaphorically, by Fort's sojourn in London in the 1920s and his daily routine of research in the British Museum Library "in that dark social valley between two great wars".

As a self-described "agnostic miscreant", Bainton finds Fort is not beyond criticism. He (gently) chides Fort for too rigorously dismissing "the priestcraft of science"; an uncharacteristic myopia that may have led Fort to make a few mistakes, such as asserting that the Moon was smaller and nearer than officially claimed. "Had he used some of the scientific methodology he sometimes despised" Bainton argues, Fort could have concluded that the smaller Moon would have had to have a density 10 times that of lead to drive Earth's tides. But such is the charm of Fort's exposition that mostly one is in no doubt that his 'explanations' – such as a stationary Sargasso Sea above the atmosphere – were preposterous... but not more so, Fort claimed, than orthodox ones drawn from the same data.

> **"Fort's explanations were no more preposterous than orthodox ones drawn from the same data"**

There are many equally preposterous tales herein, and Bainton is honest about wanting to believe versus the necessity of caution. For example, he tells of his "soft spot" for Timothy Good, the UFO advocate and "truly great musician" who, after a symphony concert in New York in 1967, found himself in a hotel lobby musing about Earthbound aliens disguised as humans. Good says he mentally "sent out a message" for any such listening to come and sit by him and touch their nose with their index finger. A dark-suited man did just that, stared at him and left. When asked (on a TV show in 2012) why Good didn't speak to the man, he replied: "I didn't, that's the fact of the matter and I regret it." Good chose to believe the theory proved; you might decide otherwise. Bainton's chapters are full of enlightening anecdotes – many of them new to me – about the human reaction to the experience of the unexpected and the inexplicable, ranging from ghostly encounters and visions to falls of frogs or anomalous artefacts.

As a guide to fortean complexities, Bainton is excellent and witty. He opens with a dedication to the late Ken Campbell; plunges in with Donald Rumsfeld's " There are things we don't know we don't know"; and ends citing Douglas Adams: "There is a theory which states that if ever anybody discovers exactly what the Universe is for and why it is here, it will instantly disappear and be replaced by something even more bizarre and inexplicable. There is another theory which states that this has already happened." What else is there to say about this excellent introduction to forteana except "You need to read this"? Old hands may be familiar with much of the material, but Bainton's own retelling and assessment makes for a refreshing revision. This book is among the most approachable, reliable and sensible introductions to forteana, being thoughtful and balanced with no taint of 'skeptical' sour grapes. "Be as cynical as you see fit," he advises, "yet enjoy the sheer fun and wonder that the fascinating world of unexplained phenomena has to offer."

Bob Rickard

Fortean Times Verdict

EXEMPLARY AND BROAD-MINDED MONSTER OF A BOOK **9**

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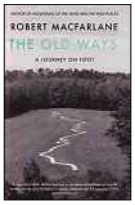
Old but good

Experiencing the landscape along corpse roads, leys, bridle paths and the rest…



The Old Ways

A Journey on Foot

Robert Macfarlane

Hamish Hamilton 2012

Hb, 432pp, illus, gloss, notes, bib, ind, £20.00, ISBN 9780241143810

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £16.50

Paths and routes have long been of interest to forteans, whether they're the corpse roads that cross moors and dales throughout the more isolated parts of the country, or the routes that inspired Alfred Watkins theory of leys.

The Old Ways starts with Robert Macfarlane walking a path across the snow-coated Cambridgeshire fields, leaving footprints that will fade with the next thaw. The book finishes with him walking alongside the footprints of a man who hasn't lived for 5,000 years. Between these two journeys Macfarlane takes us along many different routes crossing fields, moorland, seas and conflicted spaces, every word of his prose bringing a passion and joy to the exploration.

With a book about landscape, especially one that is in some ways so personal, it would be easy to write WG Hoskins style rhetoric, yearning for a lost England that never really existed. Macfarlane doesn't do this. He has an innate understanding of the landscape as a sum of its parts and uses the same elegant, measured prose whether he is describing the sea roads from Stornoway, the geology of the South Downs, shipping containers in Letchfield Garden City or graffiti on abandoned walls near Ramallah.

The book itself has a timeless feel. Each chapter takes the name of an element of the route (Ice, Silt, Granite), with the first page of each a list of topics covered (George Borrow – Hansel and Gretel – The Pylon's lyric crackle).

Throughout, Macfarlane draws together natural history, literature, folklore, archæology and geology with an elegance and integration rare in contemporary writing. Certainly in my own area of study, archæology, his observations are insightful and well researched.

Macfarlane understands that landscapes and routes are formed by people, and it is the companions on his journeys that help to weave through the prose a deeper understanding of the landscape.

His nuanced language captures the personality of these individuals and their individual ways of experiencing place.

One chapter, 'Ghost', is slightly out of pace with the others. In this Macfarlane talks in more depth about the life of one his main inspirations, the writer Edward Thomas. While this may have a slightly different tone to the rest of the book, to me it still felt part of Macfarlane's personal exploration of the landscape. 'Ghost' helps to understand where Macfarlane sees himself in a continuity of writing about paths and routes.

Within his narrative there are also encounters with places and phenomena that have more of a fortean bias, but I'll leave those for you to discover for yourself.

This is an elegant, beautiful book with prose to lose yourself in. By the time you finish you will want to place your foot on that public footpath, or field track, and rediscover the landscape at a slower pace.

Steve Toase

Fortean Times Verdict

LANDSCAPE FOR FORTEANS AND NATURE-LOVERS **8**

A Cabinet of Rarities

Antiquarian Obsessions and the Spell of Death

Erik Desmazières, with text by Patrick Mauriès

Thames & Hudson 2012

Hb, illus, bib, ind, 110pp, £35.00, ISBN 9780500516348

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £30.00

This handsome book, a stimulating and curiously uplifting memento mori, is a showcase for the meticulous artistry of Erik Desmazières, whose etchings evoke the 16th and 17th century cabinets of curiosity, long eclipsed by the austere rationalism of the 18th century Enlightenment.

Desmazières was born in Morocco, the son of a French diplomat, and educated in Paris to follow suit, but who abandoned the civil service for art. Having learned the difficult technicalities of printmaking, he has specialised in close-up studies of typical Wunderkammer objects, in sombre black and grey, sometimes subtly enhanced with aquatint, gouache and roulette, an instrument that produces lines of tiny holes.

Patrick Mauriès contrasts Desmazières's craftsmanship with the so-called conceptual artists currently in the limelight, whose main concerns seem to be public relations and marketing. (Tracey Emin as Professor of Drawing at the Royal Academy! – it's way beyond parody.)

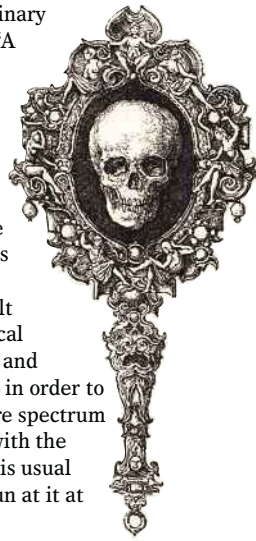
This book chimes well with the exhibition on the theme of death recently staged at the Wellcome Collection in London, featuring 300 treasures from the unique collection of Richard Harris, a former antique print dealer from Chicago, ranging from the Danse Macabre and Renaissance vanitas paintings to Mexican papier-mâché sculptures featuring the Day of the Dead.

The cabinet of curiosity, Wunderkammer, studiolo, estude, or theatrum mundi was a world-in-miniature, an assembly of the recondite and bizarre, which demonstrated the continuities between *artificiala* and *naturalia*, the treasures of art and the wonders of nature. The cabinets' creators were often melancholic and concerned with the inexorable passage of time; they aimed to remind the spectator of the vanity of earthly life – hence the subtitle of this bibliophile's delight.

Patrick Mauriès reprises the thesis he put forward in an earlier Thames & Hudson book, *Cabinets of Curiosities* (2002 – reviewed **FT179:57**), which surveyed the variety, extent and decline of the phenomenon with a wealth of photographs, and celebrated its revival in the Surrealists' juxtaposition of found objects and in David Hildebrand Wilson's genre-busting "Museum of Jurassic Technology", tucked away in a Los Angeles suburb.

This time, Mauriès writes in particular about Sir Thomas Browne (1605–82), the learned 17th century doctor and curiosity collector whose most celebrated works are *Religio Medici* and *Urn Burial*. He comments: "Browne acknowledged a fascination with hybrid forms: fossils, for example, combining as they do the mineral and the vegetable; and apparent animal cross species, such as the camelopard (an archaic name for a giraffe) and the armadillo (believed to combine the characteristics of a hedgehog and a tortoise)."

I am now particularly keen to get hold of Browne's posthumously published *Musæum Clausium* (1684), which describes an imaginary Wunderkammer: "A veritable tour de force, Browne's pseudo-catalogue makes liberal use of a whole series of themes borrowed from the world of curiosities – fantastical provenances, occult references, technical novelties, unusual and monstrous forms – in order to illustrate the entire spectrum of this obsession with the 'curious', and, in his usual manner, to poke fun at it at the same time."



Paul Sieveking

Fortean Times Verdict

A VERY HANDSOME REMINDER OF THINGS TO COME **9**

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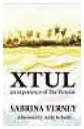
Xtul

An experience of The Process

Sabrina Verney

PublishAmerica 2011
Pb, 295pp, illus, afterword, $12.95, £24.95,
ISBN 9781456042097
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £24.95



Books about new religious movements ("sects and cults") tend to fall into three categories: inaccurate tabloid-type exposés by anti-cultists, carefully objective, balanced and often dull accounts by sociologists and highly antagonistic blame tales by disgruntled ex-members. *Xtul* is none of these; it's a beautifully written story of a young woman's thoroughly happy involvement with a highly controversial movement in the mid-Sixties.

The Process (originally Compulsions Analysis) was founded by two former Scientologists, Robert de Grimston and Mary Ann Maclean, as one of many popular psychotherapeutic organisations at the time helping people (for a fee) to examine their minds, their drives and their hang-ups, and to take control of their lives. It particularly targeted and attracted young people from well-off families; author Sabrina Verney's father was Sir John Verney, artist, author and baronet.

Sabrina was introduced to The Process by her art school lecturer and lover. Together they set off to the Bahamas in August 1966, and then to Mexico, where The Process were experimenting with communal living. Xtul (pronounced Shtool) was a tiny coastal village on the Yucatan peninsula in Mexico where they lived in some abandoned buildings on the beach. The book tells of the difficulties and the joys they shared, the food they ate, the mosquitoes that ate them, the friendships and jealousies, the tests of their resolve (especially living through Hurricane Inez) and the bond that grew between the two dozen followers and their charismatic leader Mary Ann Maclean. (Robert de Grimston is only in the background in this account; it was Mary Ann to whom they were devoted.)

And then, for Sabrina, it all crashed to a halt. In November a stranger wearing a suit arrived on their beach, an English lawyer come to take Sabrina and two others home to their parents. She was 19, still under the age of majority. We feel her bewilderment, her rage, her pain at being ripped from her new family, her teacher, her joy and peace: "The word asunder repeats over and over in my head."

This is an extraordinarily sympathetic memoir of a few months in the life of an idealistic young woman, written decades later by her older, more reflective self. It's followed by a useful 25-page essay on The Process by fortean and Sixties counter-culture historian Andy Roberts.

Sabrina Verney probably left at the right time. Shortly afterwards Mary Ann and most of the others returned to London, where they developed the disturbing theology they are still remembered for today, becoming the Process Church of the Final Judgement with the gods Lucifer, Satan and Jehovah. The swastika-like symbol of four Ps and their black capes added to the negative perception of the group.

There were further changes of approach and of name; in the spirit of the times this was very much an experimental movement finding itself by constantly redefining itself, which has no doubt contributed to the mass of misinformation about it. In the mid-Seventies de Grimston was expelled and he and Maclean divorced, and it all changed again, to community work with down-and-outs and prisoners. And then in the early-Eighties came the strangest transformation of all: from a highly controversial religious group to Best Friends, now the largest animal rescue charity in America.

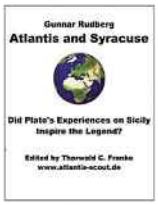
But for a snapshot of a few life-changing months in the early days of The Process, on a mosquito-ridden beach in Mexico, *Xtul* is a thought-provoking account that lingers in the memory.

David V Barrett

Fortean Times Verdict
A VERY PERSONAL MEMOIR OF THE JOY OF SECTS **9**

Atlantis holed

A reductionist monograph looks at Plato's letters and sinks the sunken kingdom



Atlantis and Syracuse

Gunnar Rudberg, trans: Cecilia Murphy; ed: Thorwald Franke

Books on Demand GmbH 2012
Pb, 122pp, £19.90, ISBN 9783848228225
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £19.90

First published in 1917 and only available in the Swedish language, this monograph would have remained largely unknown if not for Thorwald Franke's efforts to bring it to an English-speaking audience via print-on-demand.

Rubger's theory has been something of a well-kept secret, pushed aside by most, maybe since its severely reductionist approach leaves no room for romanticism and is likely to disappoint. *Caveat lector!*

Following a mercifully concentrated run-through of Atlantis theories from ancient times up to the end of the 19th century, a useful survey that underscores the fascination that Plato's strange poem about the legendary lost kingdom has held even since ancient times, Rudberg builds his own rationale for an Atlantis emanating from much closer to Plato's own experiences than anyone had previously or since dared to propose.

Starting from the basis that there is no Greek tradition about Atlantis and that Herodotus found no trace of it during his travels, Rudberg rejects the idea of an Atlantis tradition stemming from much earlier times, too tenuous and faint would it have been to provide Plato with enough material for his account. Instead, Rudberg looks to Plato's own experiences, finding in his bitter disillusionment with Syracuse an adversary to his ideal state in terms of its "philosophy of power", setting it in the distant realm of legend.

The power of Rudberg's argument relies fairly heavily on Plato's seventh letter in which his judgement of the hedonistic excesses of Syracuse compares markedly with the similar moral decay of Atlantis, supplemented by initially attractive yet underdeveloped geographic and militaristic parallels which Plato could have known from his three stays in the city.

The relevance of the linguistic comparisons made between the seventh letter and the *Critias*, perhaps tending towards the pedantic, is difficult to assess unless one's Greek is strong, so I can only take Rudberg's scholarly assertions that the letter constantly harks back to Syracuse. Thankfully, Thorwald Franke's epilogue summary of Rudberg's conjecture puts helpful perspective on what is quite possibly the most de-mythologised Atlantis theory in over 20 centuries of conjecture.

Jerry Glover

Fortean Times Verdict
DEROMANTICISED VIEW OVER ATLANTIS, STRIPPED OF FANTASY **7**

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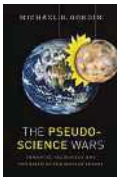
On the fringe

A study of Velikovsky's life and thinking is short-changed by a blinkered approach



The Pseudo-Science Wars

Immanuel Velikovsky and the Birth of the Modern Fringe

Michael D Gordin

University of Chicago Press 2012

Pb, 279pp, notes, £18.50, ISBN 9780226304427

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £17.00

These days, the go-to guy for radical alternative theories about the origins and history of our Solar System is Zecharia Sitchin; and if you want historical revisionism, you look to Graham Hancock or Robert Bauval; but if you asked someone about these ideas in the 1960s or '70s, one name was pre-eminent: Immanuel Velikovsky. The Princeton-based psychoanalyst and friend of Einstein sprang to prominence in 1950 with the publication of *Worlds in Collision*, which posited that many of the miracles of the Old Testament, such as the parting of the Red Sea, were real events caused by massive disruptions in the solar system, with Venus and Mars careening out of their orbits towards the Earth. Macmillan was persuaded to drop the book before publication. Velikovsky's radical ideas, however, made it a bestseller and created a market for further books such as *Ages in Chaos,* which attempted to recalibrate Egyptian history and fuelled the controversy.

Ignatius Donnelly had covered similar ground in the 19th century with his books *Atlantis* and *Ragnarok,* but the ideas were largely new to a 1950s audience. Velikovsky brought them from the fringe and into the mainstream. They and the UFO books that were beginning to trickle out laid the groundwork for the upsurge of alternative publications that began in the 60s and 70s and continues to this day.

This book looks at Velikovsky and the controversies surrounding his work. Gordin uses the story to examine how the currents Velikovsky stirred up brought about what he sees as the prominence of pseudoscience by tracking the evolution of post- and neo-Velikovskyan thought since the 1950s. As you may have already figured from how comfortable Gordin is with the term 'pseudoscience', he is in the skeptics camp, which means he is less attuned to some of these currents than he might be.

One of his main claims is that Velikovsky is a forgotten figure today; that may be true in the mainstream, but not in fortean circles. It also means that he does not give Velikovsky credit where it is due. When Velikovsky was writing, the orthodox view was that the Solar System was placid and unchanging, so his vision of planets crashing around like snooker balls seemed weird. In the 60 or so years since then, though, astronomers have discovered that many of the features of the Solar System are the results of collisions or close encounters between planets and moons, and maybe even other solar systems, as the forces of the galaxy wrench them to and fro. True, it did not happen in the way Velikovsky suggested, nor within the span of human history, but his writings set the scene for thinking about a more catastrophist Solar System, and created the environment where such ideas could be accepted. As with many scientific ideas, as soon as they become 'respectable', their origins in what Gordin would write off as 'pseudoscience' are conveniently forgotten.

Ian Simmons

Fortean Times Verdict

SCIENTIFIC IDEAS OFTEN ORIGINATE IN PSEUDOSCIENCE **6**

Are We Being Watched?

The Search for Life in the Cosmos

Paul Murdin

Thames & Hudson 2013

Hb, 224pp, illus, notes, index, £16.95, ISBN 9780500516713

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £15.25

You might expect this book to be about the possibility of extraterrestrial civilisations so advanced that they are busy observing the Earth. This subject will be of interest to many *FT* readers, but is rarely discussed in serious terms by mainstream scientists. I was intrigued, therefore, to see a book with this title written by a well-respected astrophysicist such as Paul Murdin. I hoped he would deal with challenging issues such as the nature of intelligence, its hosting by biological and non-biological systems, and the ever-thorny problem of interstellar travel. He doesn't mention them!

The book is about life on Earth, the possibility of analogous life on other Earth-like planets, and the search for primitive life-forms on Mars and other bodies in the Solar System. This is all interesting and well-presented stuff, showing how the emergence of intelligence on Earth was the cumulative result of a string of low probability events.

On this basis, Murdin concludes that the likelihood of a biologically-based intelligent species elsewhere in the Galaxy is extremely low. This may be true, but I can't help feeling I've been cheated out of a book that should have been much better.

Andrew May

Fortean Times Verdict

AN INTERESTING QUESTION WITH AN UNSATISFACTORY ANSWER **6**

Rorschach Audio

Art & Illusion for Sound

Joe Banks

Strange Attractor 2012

Hb, 192pp, illus, £10.00, ISBN 9781907222207

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £9.50

It is the burden of the debunker that saying "Oh no it isn't" is less appealing than saying "Oh yes it is". Joe Banks is then to be commended for this speculative, though thoroughly sceptical, handling of Electronic Voice Phenomena (EVP).

EVP is the tendency for the static and radio interference on audio recordings to be – rather egocentrically – interpreted as spirits of the dead trying to communicate with us. It had its heyday around the middle of the last century, but is favoured by the knockabout ghost hunters who stalk the bottom of your TV listings. *Rorschach Audio* draws analogies between EVP and the psychological stimuli devised by Hermann Rorschach – inkblots onto which observers projects their own meaning. So, the author suggests, we tend to interpret random snatches of white noise as being both inherently scary and personal to us, and it is but a small intuitive leap for these to be heard as voices of dead relatives.

The history and analysis of EVP is handled with charm and tact. The logical inconsistencies of this 'quasi-religious' belief are presented with a crushing clarity, tempered with much shuffling of Banks's feet, as though he were a bit embarrassed by how daft the whole business seems. The remainder of the book expands the central concept before coalescing into a series of essays about art and perception. What the bells of London and trains seem to be saying is interwoven with Leonardo da Vinci's advice to art students to look for landscapes in patches of moss, mishearing song lyrics as a creative process, how context alone can make saying, "Let him have it, Chris" a fatal mistake and some gems about the wartime work of the BBC Monitoring Service, a representative of which is said to have informed Churchill that Hitler was dead by interpreting a piece of music on German radio.

Banks can be accused of repetition and the lack of an index is baffling; however, *Rorschach Audio* proves an exceptional jumping-off point for the reader's own reveries. As your eyes drift from the page and settle on a fixed point of some irregularly patterned wallpaper, it is there that you see the author's point.

Mark Norton

Fortean Times Verdict

THE ART OF HEARING GHOSTS IN THE STATIC **7**

WorldMags.net

ALSO RECEIVED

We leaf through a selection of recent fortean books...

Caspar Hauser

Jakob Wassermann

Floris Books (www.florisbooks.com) 2012
Pb, pp467, £16.99, ISBN 9780863158803

This is a welcome reprint of the 1928 Englished version of Wassermann's 1908 'novelisation' of the mysterious life and death of the iconic 'boy from nowhere', who turned up in Nuremberg in 1828, aged 16, hardly able to speak and seemingly a survivor of strange captivity. He became famous beyond the city and even beyond Germany as people were struck by his circumstance and "innocence". In 1833, at the age of 21, Caspar was found dying of stab wounds, his assailant unknown. Wassermann grew up knowing the story from his grandfather who had seen and spoken to the boy. An introduction by Terry Boardman explains that Wassermann hoped his "poetic fantasy" about Caspar's spiritual and psychological plight would mirror the contemporary "soul of the German people"; but it was largely scorned by his countrymen who "could not accept that a Jew had written such a characteristically German book". Later scholars, however, have recognised that Wassermann's portrait of the "innocent soul", found but remaining lost amid an uncomprehending world, contains "deeper truths" and was closer to "Hauser's real being" that any other historical source.

Military Response to UFO Activity

Stephen Cox

Schiffer Publishing (www.schifferbooks.com) 2012.
Pb, pp160, refs, glossary, appendices, illus, £10.50, ISBN 9780764340628

This tight focus on UFO reports made by military and other pilots, astronauts and government officials makes for pretty dense reading (thank heavens at least for the glossary of acronyms). Cox – an ex-Navy vet and MUFON investigator with UFO sightings of his own – aims to explain the multiple ways in which serving witnesses struggle to express their anomalous experiences within the restrictions of military and 'official secrets' codes, and subsequently how those reports are then processed, suppressed, distributed and even made public. The biggest of many reasons for 'official secrecy', at least in the USA, still seems to be the now rather archaic notion of avoiding 'public panic'. Others might include details of intrusion into sovereign airspace or even the inadequacy of the military response. Cox is convinced that the current culture of suppression and obfuscation in the military has actually harmed or held back the American space-race; imagine, he says sincerely, if NASA was allowed free access to the ET tech stashed away in Hangar 18. Good questions are raised, but will anyone take them seriously?

Your Life After Death

Michael G Reccia

Band of Light Media (www.bandoflight.co.uk) 2012.
Pb, pp288, index, £14.95 ISBN 9781906625030

Michael G Reccia used to be a conventional spirit medium and clairvoyant, communicating messages from beyond the grave to bereaved individuals. Eventually, he realised that his calling was more than just offering words of comfort from dead relatives and progressed from mediumship to full-blown trance communications. The main entity communicating through Reccia is a "wise and ancient discarnate spirit from a higher level of being" called Joseph (although someone rather charmingly called "The Persian Gentleman" sometimes pops in). Joseph has already dictated two previous books through his entranced amenuensis, and here tackles the big question of what happens after death. Well, it involves vibrations and astral planes, but it's also surprisingly orderly and ordinary, complete with helpers, hospitals and heavenly arrival lounges. It's reminiscent of nothing so much as Powell and Pressburger's *A Matter of Life and Death*.

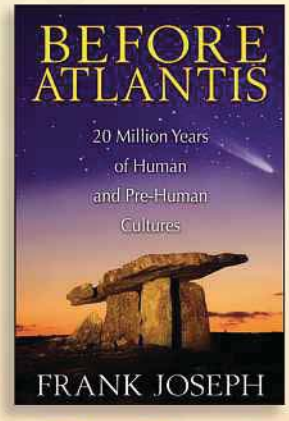
Travelling Daze

Alan Dearling with Traveller friends

Enabler Publications (www.enablerpublications.co.uk) 2012.
Pb, pp200, illus, £16.50, ISBN 9780952331698

Subtitled "Words and images from the UK's new Travellers and festivals, late 1960s to the here and now", this is an appropriately sprawling and untidy tribute to a specific era and subculture that, despite lingering on in isolated pockets and individual lifestyles, has largely been displaced in the 21st century. Despite its roots in the early free festival scene, it was a movement that really reached its peak with the anti-Thatcherite New Age Travellers of the 1980s and early 1990s, and such iconic countercultural moments as the Peace Convoy and the Battle of the Beanfield. If you were there, this gloriously illustrated labour of love, with its hundreds of fantastic photos provided by many "Traveller friends", will bring back some powerful memories. If you weren't, then Dearling's book represents a priceless sociological document of a vanished world.

NEW BOOKS



Before Atlantis
20 Million Years of Human and Pre-Human Cultures
FRANK JOSEPH

Before Atlantis compellingly challenges conventional theories of evolution and the origins of civilization. The author traces the genesis of modern human civilization to Indonesia and the Central Pacific 75,000 years ago, launched by a catastrophic volcanic eruption that abruptly reduced humanity from two million to a few thousand individuals.

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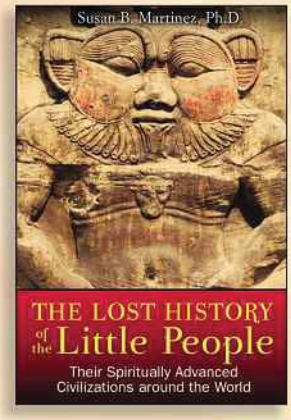
ISBN 978-1-59143-157-2



The Lost History of the Little People
Their Spiritually Advanced Civilizations around the World
SUSAN B. MARTINEZ, Ph.D.

All cultures have legends about prehistoric forebears of short stature who survived the Great Flood and initiated the first sacred traditions. From the squat "gods" of Mexico and Peru to the fairy kingdom of Europe and the blond pygmies of Madagascar, these little people are remembered as masters of stone carving, agriculture, navigation, writing, and shamanic healing.

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Defying Gravity

Dir various, Canada/US 2009

Mediumrare, £34.99 (DVD)

In 2052, four men and four women head out in the spaceship *Antares* on a six-year mission to land on seven planets or moons in the Solar System – but before they even leave Earth orbit they start to be affected by dreams, hallucinations and physiological changes. Something external is exerting a control over the mission, and the astronauts know nothing about it, though their mission controllers at the International Space Organisation (ISO) on Earth do. It's gradually revealed that an unknown intelligent power known as Beta is controlling and intervening in the mission, even to the extent of selecting who will be on it.

With constant echoes and parallels between present and past, the story cuts backwards and forwards between the present-day mission, the early training of the astronauts five years earlier and the disastrous Mars mission five years before that when Maddux Donner (Ron Livingston) was ordered to take off, leaving two of his fellow crew, including his lover, behind to die on the red planet. The commander who issued the order is now ISO flight director – and is again giving orders which seem callous and incomprehensible to the astronauts and ground crew.

It's good nuts-and-bolts space SF – but what drives this series is the crew's relationships and their complications, their hang-ups and troubled pasts; and Beta plays on their guilt. The awkward relationship between Donner and Zoe Barnes (Laura Harris) is at the heart of the story. Early on in her training she had a brief fling with Donner, became pregnant and had an abortion; on the spaceship she keeps hearing a baby crying. Would so many people with so many psychological screw-ups manage to get through the years of screening and training to become astronauts? Perhaps not, but this is what the story is all about, and anyway, all of us have hang-ups.

Unusually for TV SF, religious belief is treated with some respect. One astronaut is a Catholic who prays and quotes the Bible, and finds her deep belief in God tested; another is a Hindu whose quiet faith in Ganesha keeps him the most balanced of them all.

The characterisation and dialogue are excellent throughout; the subtle multiple layering of the plot is a joy to observe; I watched the whole thing twice to catch any nuances I'd missed the first time.

In most ways this multi-national but largely Canadian-made space drama is ultra-real in its attention to detail. It's particularly good on the rigour of astronaut training. When Zoe throws up while training on the centrifuge she's given a necklace with a small bucket. Another astronaut having her first experience in a sensory deprivation tank claws her way out of it within seconds. A spacesuit designed for the intense pressure and heat of the surface of Venus is bulky and cumbersome, and very slow to walk in.

The makers stress how much thought went into the design of the *Antares* to make it look right, but in places they've slipped up. Earth life in 2052, including clothing, hairstyles, cars and bars, seems identical to that of 2009. There's an explanation of why there is gravity on the spacecraft: "Our grav-suits contain nano-fibre which pulls us towards the deck electromagnetically". It's not entirely convincing, but at least it's there. But there's no attempt to explain how the astronauts and ground crew have instantaneous radio communication with each other when *Antares* is at Venus which, even at its closest to Earth, is 2½ light-minutes away.

Whatever the criticisms, which are minor, the incredible emotional power of the final episode, when two characters are on Venus, is among the most intense edge-of-the-seat television drama I've ever seen.

Many of *Defying Gravity's* plot points are left unresolved; creator James Parriott had the next two seasons and the ending mapped out, and determined fans can find them online. It's sad that once again the networks showed their complete lack of creative sensitivity and appreciation of such an excellent, well written series; ATV barely marketed it then stopped screening it half way through its only season. For Americans, this DVD set is their first chance to watch it all.

David V Barrett

Fortean Times Verdict

INTELLIGENT SF SERIES SADLY CUT OFF IN ITS PRIME **9**

My Ex 2: Haunted Lover

Dir Piyapan Choopetch, Thailand 2010

MVM, £15.99 (DVD)

If you haven't seen *My Ex*, don't worry – this starts with our four attractive female protagonists sitting around watching it. But before you conclude that this is yet another exercise in postmodern storytelling, just watch as, once again, Thai cinema serves up a horror film so smart that it puts Hollywood genre equivalents to shame.

Owing almost nothing to the often stuffy Western ghost story (but a fair bit to the Japanese tradition), *My Ex 2* embraces the worlds of fashion, sex and tropical paradises and then sours and subverts them. Violence is used sparingly, which serves to emphasise its extreme brutality, while its seeming randomness cuts to the heart of the story – which is what? Little more than innocent Cee (Ratchawin Wongviriya) being spooked by the ghost of her cheating ex-boyfriend's bit on the side.

But, as fans of the recent crop of Thai horror know, things are never as simple as they appear; soon, narrative, perspective and any sense of what's going on (at least initially) seem to tumble in on themselves. I can't think of any other current genre of movie which is quite so unsettling to watch, purely for its subversion of accepted norms and film tropes. Twists are so numerous that to review the film in detail would require an inhuman restraint to avoid a mass of spoilers; so, my advice is to see it for yourselves and enjoy some Thai horror at its supernaturally anarchic best.

Tim Weinberg

Fortean Times Verdict

COMPACT, SHORN OF ALL FAT AND SCARY AS HELL **8**

WorldMags.net

Midnight Son

Dir Scott Leberecht, USA 2011

Monster Pictures, £9.99

Jacob is a very pale young man, who avoids sunlight, works night-shifts as a security guard, and has an increasing craving for blood: wonder what all that could mean? The audience is way ahead of Zak Kilberg's confused would-be vampire in this lo-fi, Sundance-sensibility take on the genre. Maya Parish gives a spunky performance as Jacob's inquisitive girlfriend Mary, while Jo D Jonz's hospital worker Marcus supplies his initial blood needs, leading to a growing body count and a spreading infection. Director Leberecht is a special effects expert, but the effects here are kept to a minimum in favour of character and atmosphere. In approach it echoes George Romero's *Martin* or Abel Ferrara's *The Addiction*, and while not everything works, Midnight Son is a far better exploration of vampire life than any number of *Twilight* knock-offs.

Brian J Robb

Fortean Times Verdict

LOW-KEY VAMPIRE FLICK IS NOTHING NEW, BUT ENGAGES **7**

Holy Motors

Dir Leos Carax, France 2012

Artificial Eye, £11.99 (DVD), £14.99 (Blu-ray)

Leos Carax's first film in over a decade is an offbeat affair. Denis Lavant stars as a mysterious figure who travels Paris in a white stretch limo enacting various roles, without any obvious sign of an audience. Channelling Lon Chaney, he dons various guises in the back of the limo. Weirdest of all is "Monsieur Merde", a green-clad subhuman who kidnaps Eva Mendes's fashion model. Just when you think things can't get any stranger, there's a song from Kylie Minogue. What does it all mean? Who knows? It is, however, strange and beguiling, and clearly has something to say about cinema itself, as well as the performances we all enact in public. An hour-long interview with Carax leaves you none the wiser, nor do deleted scenes provide any enlightenment…

Brian J Robb

Fortean Times Verdict

A FLIGHT OF FANTASY THAT WILL APPEAL MOST TO CINEPHILES **8**

THE REVEREND'S REVIEW

FT's resident man of the cloth REVEREND PETER LAWS dons his dog collar and faces the flicks that Church forgot! (www.theflicksthatchurchforgot.com)

DRACULA

Dir Terence Fisher, UK 1958

Lionsgate, £19.99 (Blu-ray + DVD)

To say that vampire movies are a metaphor for sex is about as clichéd as saying *Star Wars* is like a Western in space. In fact, the idea features in so many discussions of the *Dracula* story (both scholarly and popular) that one might assume Stoker always intended to weave a myth of full-blooded sensual lust. But as Christopher Frayling points out in the extras on this new Blu-ray, nobody was making the explicit link between fangs and fornication until this: Hammer's 1958 film version of *Dracula*. Gone is the white haired, moustachioed monster from Stoker's original; gone is the stilted, hokey aristocrat of Bela Lugosi's interpretation. According to the Hammer poster, this Dracula is the "terrifying lover who died, yet lived!"

Budget conscious scriptwriter Jimmy Sangster throws Stokers' sprawling novel into the mincer. Removing entire sections, dropping the wolves and bats, limiting the action to one country and even making Jonathan Harker a vampire hunter from the outset! But rather than a butchered version of the book, what comes out at the other end is a wonderfully lean film that buzzes along with swashbuckling efficiency.

Christopher Lee only appears for about eight minutes in the movie, but, as in the novel, his presence is felt at every moment. When he's on screen, his mix of hypnotic sensuality and sheer animal rage shows us why for many, Lee is the definitive Dracula. When he first bares his fangs in that iconic, hissing reveal, with furious blood-red eyes, the viewer is genuinely startled. Lugosi was fun and maybe a little creepy, but this Dracula is actually frightening. Yet despite the towering presence of Lee, in many ways it's Peter Cushing who carries the film. His portrayal of Van Helsing (channelled, it appears, through Errol Flynn) is as energetic as it is nuanced. His desire to destroy the count borders on obsession, but not so much that he doesn't have time to wrap a cold little girl in his fur lined jacket, telling her she looks like a teddy bear.

Dracula (known in America as *The Horror of Dracula*) is the perfect storm of Hammer talent, where stars, director, writer, composer and set designer forged the studio's winning formula forever: sex and scares in glorious colour. This new HD restoration even includes footage once thought lost; of Dracula seducing Mina and clawing his face off in the finale. They don't last long, but having them back in place certainly makes this release definitive. The HD quality is the best the film has ever looked, though it lacks the fine detail of some other back catalogue releases. Along with some solid extras, this really is a must have for any fan of British horror.

Fortean Times Verdict

DEFINITIVE VERSION OF THE DEFINITIVE SCREEN DRACULA **9**

WorldMags.net

The Hunt

Dir Thomas Vinterberg, Denmark 2012

Arrow Films, £17.99 (DVD), £19.99 (Blu-ray)

Mild-mannered, middle-aged Lucas (Mads Mikkelsen) is a nursery teacher in a small rural town in Denmark. His marriage has broken down and he is involved in a custody battle over his teenage son Marcus, but Lucas is popular with the children, respected in the community and goes hunting and drinking with his male buddies. His life is slightly austere, a bit lonely, but not unpleasant; he has a lovely dog and even finds a girlfriend when a new cleaner starts work at the school.

It might not sound like much, but it is, after all, a pretty average life; and it's completely shattered when five-year-old pupil Klara, the daughter of Lucas's best friend, tells the female head teacher that Lucas has shown her his willie.

While we know from the start that Klara's bid for adult attention is born out of problems at home and a sense of loneliness that attaches itself to Lucas and his dog, the female staff believe Klara's claim without reservation; a male child psychologist is called in, and his series of leading questions quickly turns the child's story into a full-blown case of repeated sexual abuse. Once the parents are informed, it goes viral, with virtually every child in the school coming forward with an identical tale. Soon, Lucas finds himself a pariah in the community – investigated by the police, refused service in shops, shunned or even attacked by old friends.

It's a nightmare recorded in a crisp, straightforward style by one-time Dogme filmmaker Vinterberg; watching the descent of this good, if temperamentally passive, man is painfully affecting. Mikkelsen's central performance (garnering Best Actor at Cannes) is absolutely compelling (if a long way from his memorable Bond villain in *Casino Royale*), and he has powerful support from the rest of the excellent cast. The exquisite photography frames the whole thing in an idyllic looking, autumnal world that, of course, isn't as wholesome as it looks. Stirring up memories of the Satanic Ritual Abuse panic of the 1980s and 90s, Vinterberg's film is both perfectly controlled and emotionally charged – and suddenly very timely. It's a quietly explosive take on the nature of abuse panics, asking difficult questions about how we deal as a society with these sorts of accusations.

David Sutton

Fortean Times Verdict

HARROWING PORTRAIT OF THE SPREAD OF AN ABUSE PANIC **9**

The Bay

Dir Barry Levinson, US 2012

Momentum, £15.99 (DVD, Blu-ray)

Most genre-watchers will be intrigued to see the name of a mainstream Hollywood figure like Barry Levinson attached to the helm of an 'ecological horror movie'. The second surprise is that, while this is (yet another!) found footage movie, it relies not on a single audiovisual artefact but has been stitched together, Frankenstein style, from myriad different sources to document the events of a single day in a single place: 4 July in a pretty Maryland seaside resort on Chesapeake Bay. The framing device for this massive mash-up of TV reports, phone footage, CCTV, hospital videos and so on is a monologue to camera by Donna (Kether Donahue), a rookie reporter at the time of the events three years previously, and now about to blow the whistle on a major environmental catastrophe that has, until now, been suppressed by the government.

One can't help thinking of Spielberg's classic *Jaws* whilst watching the early scenes of holiday parades and crab-eating contests, soon interrupted by people falling violently ill and being rushed to hospital. The threat may be less tangible than a killer shark, but there's obviously something nasty in the water. In this case, though, the horror is undeniably man-made. Sadly, one can't help thinking this would have worked better as a conventional movie; as it stands, *The Bay* simply feels rather unformed and unfinished. More damagingly, the central premise of a mass of found footage sitting around for three years due to a government cover-up doesn't convince – after all, in our current social media savvy world, this stuff would have been all over Twitter in a matter of hours.

David Sutton

Fortean Times Verdict

AMBITIOUS FOUND-FOOTAGE ECO-HORROR FALLS A BIT FLAT **6**

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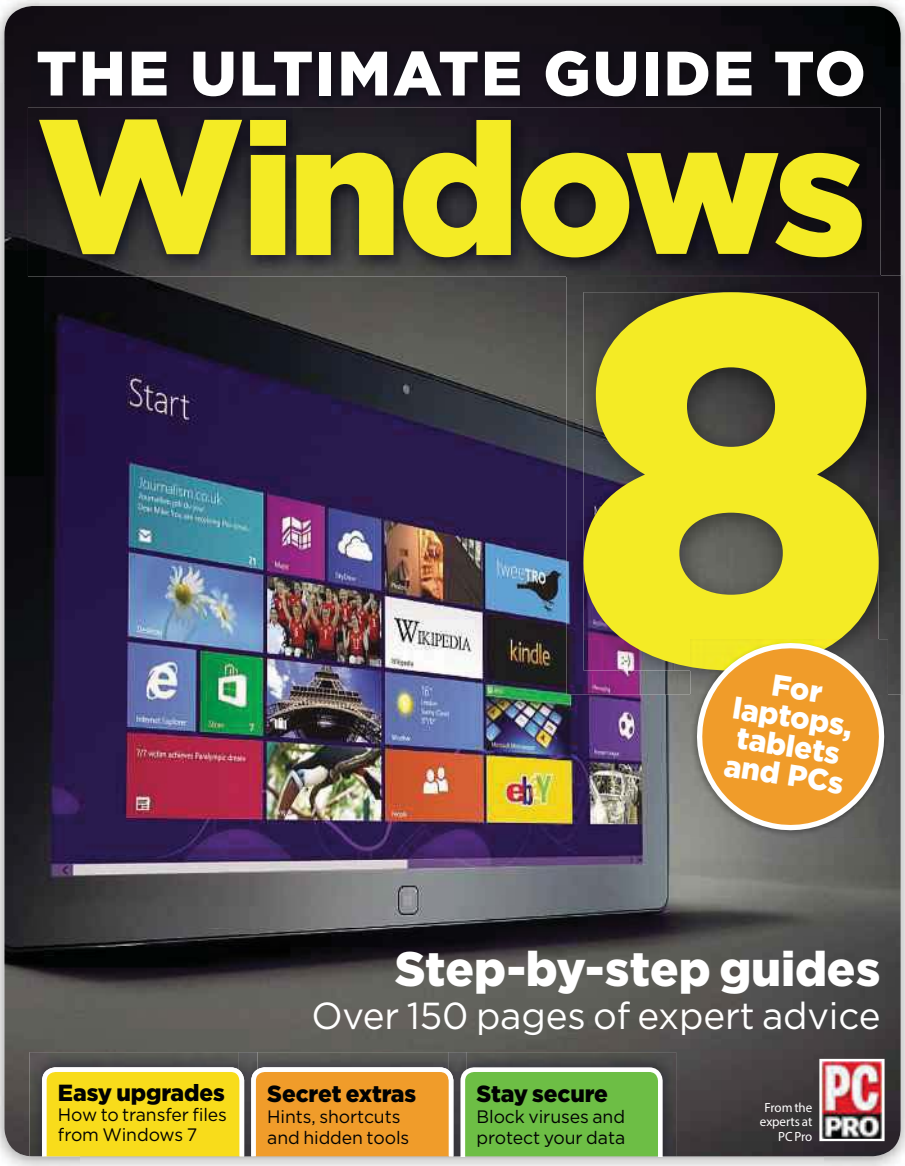

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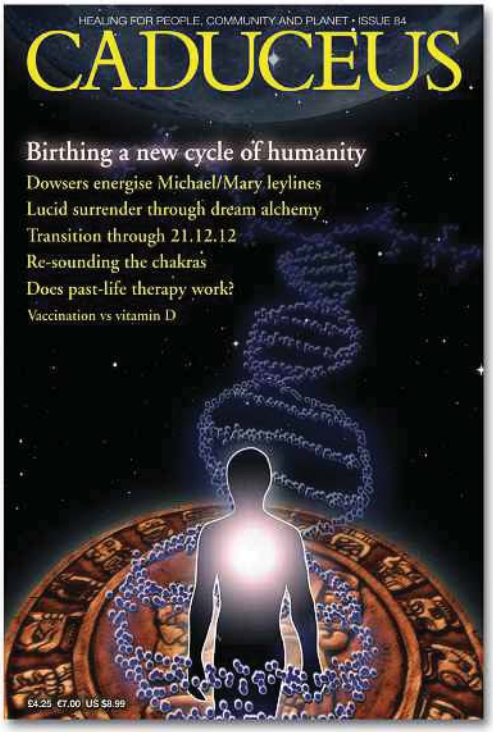
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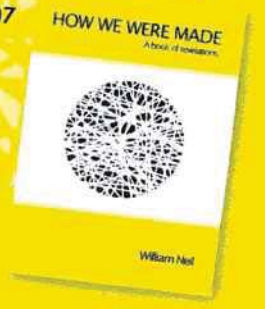
Nexus Magazine review, Aug/Sept 2007



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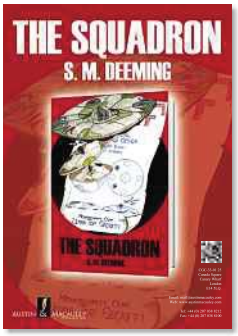

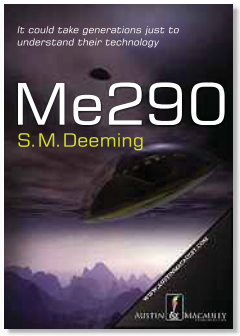

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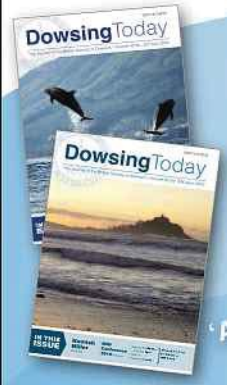

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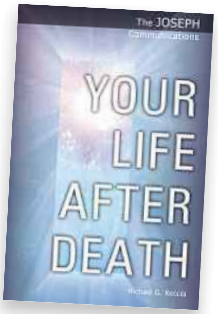

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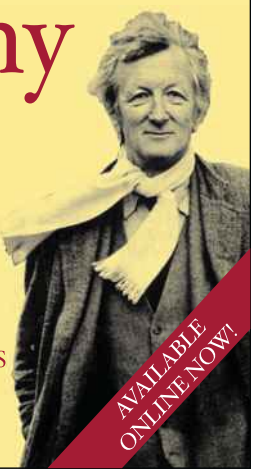

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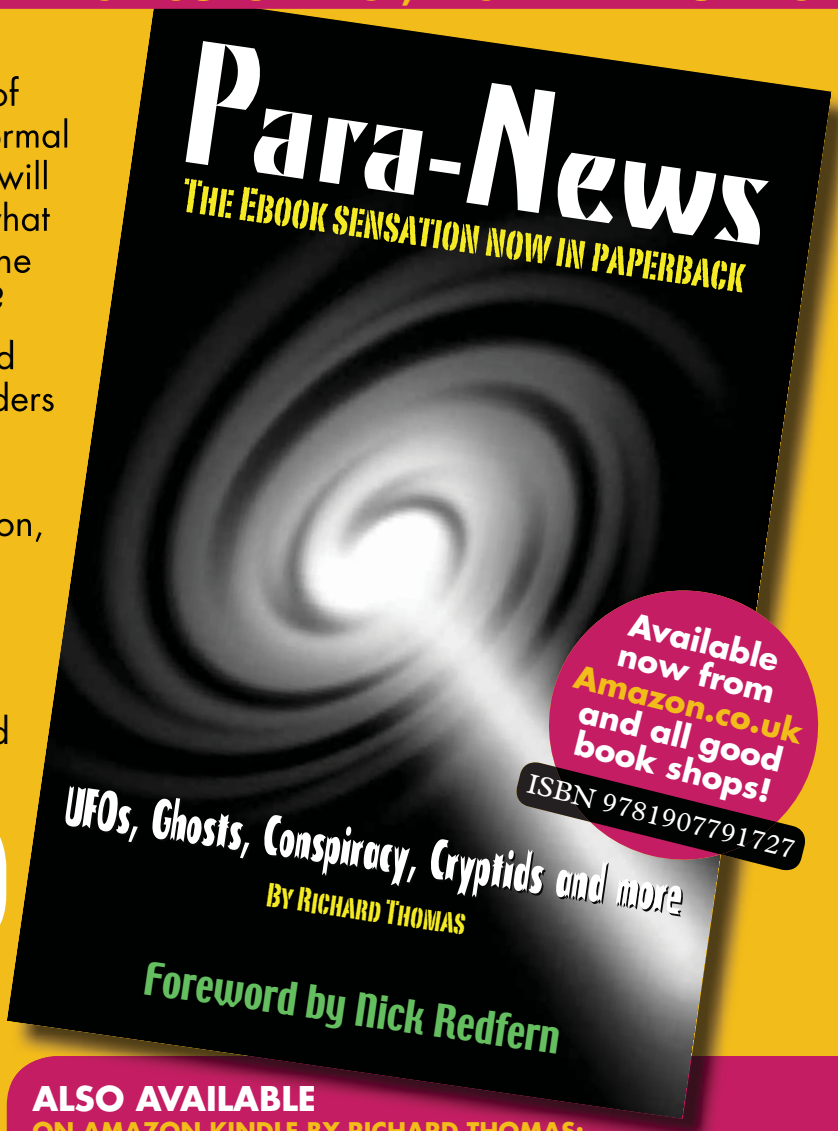
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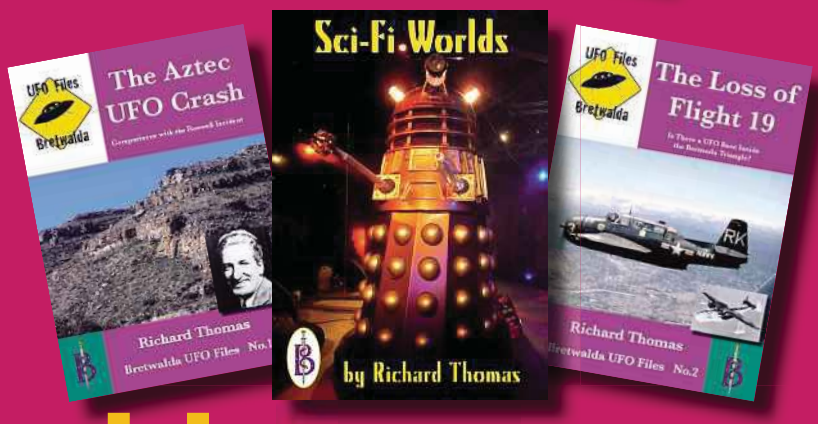

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Richard Thomas is also a contributing writer to **CSO - the New Cult Television Fanzine**

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Dear FT...

letters

John Michell

Considering that it bears the title "The Fortean Times Random Dictionary of the Damned", many might take the Hierophant's Apprentice as retailing FT's "official line", or at least having the magazine's approval; and while the author is obviously highly opinionated, I've generally found myself to be broadly in agreement with him. However, I was dismayed to find John Michell, who made some respectable contributions to 'mainstream' forteana in books such as *Phenomena* and *Living Wonders*, described as an "old trickster and charlatan" [**FT299:41**], particularly as no evidence was adduced to back up the statement. John may occasionally have been eccentric, naïve and frankly boneheaded, but I've not heard anyone question his sincerity before and to describe him thus effectively damns the entire body of his work, good, bad or indifferent. To call someone a charlatan is bad enough, but to do so when they're dead and no longer able to defend themselves strikes me as reprehensible.

Steve Moore
London

The Hierophant's Apprentice replies:

For years, FT has published a little panel on a nether page that insists the magazine "toes no party line". It follows that there is no official FT line, so there is nothing for the Hierophant's Apprentice to toe. In fact a perusal of the Dictionary entries shows that the Apprentice doesn't even toe a particularly consistent line of his own. Possibly he has a bit of trickster in his blood himself.

For the record, there was no intention to suggest that John Michell was insincere, since insincerity isn't part of the trickster's or charlatan's job description. It's possible to be both without even realising it. And besides: since when was "sincerity" any kind of criterion for judging the worth of anyone's effusions?

That John Michell disseminated various statements as 'facts' or 'truths' that were anything but, is demonstrable, if time-consuming to illustrate. It's my suspicion that he often threw out ideas to see what would happen to them (tricksterism indeed), and wasn't always too bothered about their precision. His speculations in The Flying Saucer Vision *(the book to which I was referring) seem to fit that profile rather well. But whatever he wrote can hardly be fenced off from scrutiny.*

As for dead men and reprehensible behaviour: I hope I may restore the smile to Steve Moore's face by reporting that I did once, in a not unaffable tone and with laughter in my voice, call John Michell an old fraud, to his face. Almost levitating from his chair, and causing heads to turn in the restaurant, he shouted back: "You little pipsqueak!" Had I touched a nerve? I couldn't possibly comment. No doubt that he was alive, though.

Roadside saviour

David Hambling postulates an interesting psychological theory for the 'myth' of the phantom or vanishing hitchhiker [**FT298:14**]. However, a large element of his theory relies on his assertion that actual witnesses to such things are all but phantoms themselves, or at least incredibly hard to track down. In fact, there is one very famous witness to such an incident telling the tale in his own words on YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zzksX-9vh9s

Telly Savalas, the actor who played Kojak, recounts an extraordinary encounter in the late 1950s that has all the key elements of the standard tale: the ghostly companion, the left-behind object proving the reality of his presence, and the subsequent discovery that the stranger was dead – but there is one intriguing twist. In his account, Savalas himself was the hitchhiker and the phantom was the driver who gave him a lift. With the exception of this role reversal, all elements match what Hambling identifies as the key parts of the familiar story. A signed note and phone number handed to him by his roadside saviour, James Cullen, led Savalas to contact Cullen's widow, only to be told of his death – with the signature and description matching that of the deceased. The clip is worth watching just for the remarkably silly voice re-enacting the role of the spectral driver.

Lawrence Brennan
Liverpool

A Royal Body

Historians disagree about the fate of James II's remains [**FT299:5**]. The exiled Stuart monarch died at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, north of Paris, in 1701. His body was laid to rest above ground in a coffin at the Chapel of Saint Edmund in the Church of the English Benedictines, Rue St Jacques, Paris. Lights were kept burning round his coffin until the French Revolution 90 years later, when his tomb was raided. *The English Illustrated Magazine*'s article on St Germain from September 1901 asserted that parts of his bowel sent to the parish church of St Germain-en-Laye were rediscovered in 1824 and are the only known remains left; however, John Miller (*James II*, 1978) and John MacLeod (*Dynasty, the Stuarts, 1560–1807*, 1999) state that all of his remains were lost. David Hilliam (*Kings, Queens, Bones & Bastards*, 1998) disputes that James's remains were either scattered or lost, stating that revolutionaries were amazed at the body's preservation in the 1790s and put it on public exhibition, where miracles were said to have happened. Hilliam says that the body was then kept above ground until George IV ordered it buried in the parish church of St Germain-en-Laye in 1824.

Hiram O'Keefe
Quimper, Finisterre

Mothman Explained?

I found it interesting to read Greg May's letter [**FT298:68**] about the possibility of Mothman being a series of sandhill crane sightings combined with mass hysteria. I came to a similar conclusion in my 2010 dissertation, 'How and why did the Mothman come into being?'. I also showed how this mixed with the cultural appropriation of the creature, the area's proximity to air traffic and the social factors that afflicted the local community, leading to Mothman's creation and its ongoing association with other sightings in the area. The paper can be read here: http://www.academia.edu/542721/How_and_why_did_the_Mothman_come_into_being ; or a copy can be attained from Edinburgh University Library. It contains an exhaustive list of sources and a Mothman sightings timeline (featured in the Mothman Museum in Point Pleasant, West Virginia).

Andrew Jay Harvey
By email

Bat wings

While several authors admit that the flying machine 'flap' of the late 19th century in the skies of America were actually fabrications from Midwest Liar's Clubs, there is one anomaly that needs a closer examination. On 12 September 1880 the *New York Times* reported a "marvellous apparition" that appeared in the skies over Coney Island. It was described as "a man with bat's wings and improved frog's legs" and was reportedly seen by "many reputable persons... and they all agree it was a man engaged in flying toward New Jersey". The phenomenon was said to have passed over Coney Island at an altitude of 1,000ft (300m) and a man's face was clearly seen which "wore a cruel and determined expression".

This story turns up in practically every paranormal book regarding the discussion of 'winged humanoids'. I would like to know how someone could see a facial expression from such a distance. I don't believe binoculars were in style at that time, or were they?

Greg May
Orlando, Florida

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Finnish prodigy

This stuffed two-headed calf is on display in the Helsinki Natural History Museum – in the café, of all places.
Adam Bradbury
Salford, Greater Manchester

Sisterhood Lives On

Further to your obituary of Jack Fertig, aka Sister Boom Boom [**FT298:298**], you referred to the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence in the past tense. The Order of Perpetual Indulgence is still going strong both in USA with the San Francisco 'Motherhouse', and various other houses across the USA and elsewhere. Here in the UK the Sisters are still active in London, Manchester and Edinburgh. You will find us making a nuisance of ourselves at most pride events and various other places.
Tim Greening-Jackson, *aka Sister Matic deBauchery of the Ecstatic Dancing Habit*
By email

No wonder

Regarding the car on a third floor balcony in Kiev [**FT298:12**]: while I can't be certain, I suspect that it is actually a model 'flying car' similar to the one in this YouTube video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g7f1feSjDks or one that was on *Top Gear* a few years ago – essentially, a helium balloon with plastic panels to give the appearance of a solid car. The main reason for thinking so – apart from the whole '60ft up' part, of course – is the appearance of the side windows, which in the photograph look more like black shiny plastic than tinted glass.
Angus Rae
Edinburgh

Editor's note: *Sadly, Mr Rae, you are probably right. In fact, a website shows the car being lifted by a crane and another photo shows that this was in fact a viral marketing campaign to demonstrate that Toyota's Yaris is the "parking master". For more info go to- http://www.flipmeme.com/image/Oy2fS*

Decoding *The Key*

The purportedly non-fiction books of Whitley Strieber, such as *Communion*, present one of two bizarre possibilities. Either his tales of "the visitors" are pure invention – a stellar achievement of the human imagination, since these tales rank right up there on the weirdness scale with John Keel's *Mothman Prophecies* – or they are based on realities stranger than run-of-the-mill paranormal phenomena, thus opening a vaster prospect than commonly imagined, for what unutterably strange hidden dimensions may lurk within the Cosmos.

Strieber says that encounters with "the visitors" – who sound like interdimensional beings more than physical space aliens – are sometimes recalled as sightings of owls. During a childhood illness, a large white owl, or hallucination of one, appeared on the sill of the open window of my bedroom on the top floor of our family's home in Manhattan. This was about a mile from the south-east corner of Central Park, where a real owl could have come from. But it also seemed to have a bluish glow and speak a few unfriendly words. It impressed my fevered brain as being poisonous. Its exact manner of arrival and departure was either not witnessed or not remembered.

But Strieber compounds the riddle of fact versus fiction in his recent *The Key*. This book supposedly relates his conversation with a mysterious stranger who knocked on the door of his hotel room in Toronto at 2am. Some of what he says the stranger told him became the basis for *The Coming Global Superstore*, a book that mutated into *The Day After Tomorrow*, a natural disaster film that was derided by climate scientists.

Actually, the dire scenario presented by the stranger is not impossible – Strieber cites an *Atlantic Monthly* article, "The Great Climate Flip-Flop", explaining how increased Arctic ice-melt from global warming could divert the Gulf Stream, starting a chain of feedbacks that could end up as a new Ice Age. And "The End of the Long Summer" – 11,700 years of climate stability that, according to environmental journalist Diane Dumanoski, may soon come to an end – explains how man-made climate change may destabilise the entire system, with sudden, wild swings in either direction, not just milder temperatures. Evidence seems to show that, before the "long summer" that has favoured civilisation, our forebears had to endure far more drastic and sudden climate shifts than any in recorded history. But the stranger – vividly described as a highly charismatic individual with paranormal powers – adds an element of absurdity by saying that Earth is a "death trap" because of treacherous and severe climate swings – akin to those sharp and sudden changes that Dumanoski says were actually beneficial, because they were drivers of human evolution. But the stranger says we cannot escape from the trap, because a genius child, who would have made possible a space drive through unlocking the secrets of gravity, was never born because his Jewish parents perished in the Holocaust. If the possibility of that child and his discovery were foreseen by whoever the stranger's informants might have been (if he or they existed), why wasn't the Holocaust and its aborting of the space drive discovery foreseen as well? If the "warp drive" is possible, won't it be discovered anyway sooner or later? And where exactly is that safer planet, bio-friendly but conveniently uninhabited, that the chosen ones might get to while the rest of humanity succumbed, if they did so? Indeed, if that nicer planet was not found after all, whatever portion of our species remained behind on the "death trap" and survived – just as our primitive ancestors, and their own hominid ancestors had – might turn out to be better off than those who, as in a song by Neil Young, had attempted to fly "Mother Nature's silver seed to a new home". I hope to learn the outcome of all this in my next life – that is, if the future parents of my next incarnation do not themselves perish, before that child can be born, in some humanly caused climate holocaust.
Richard Porter
Denver, Colorado

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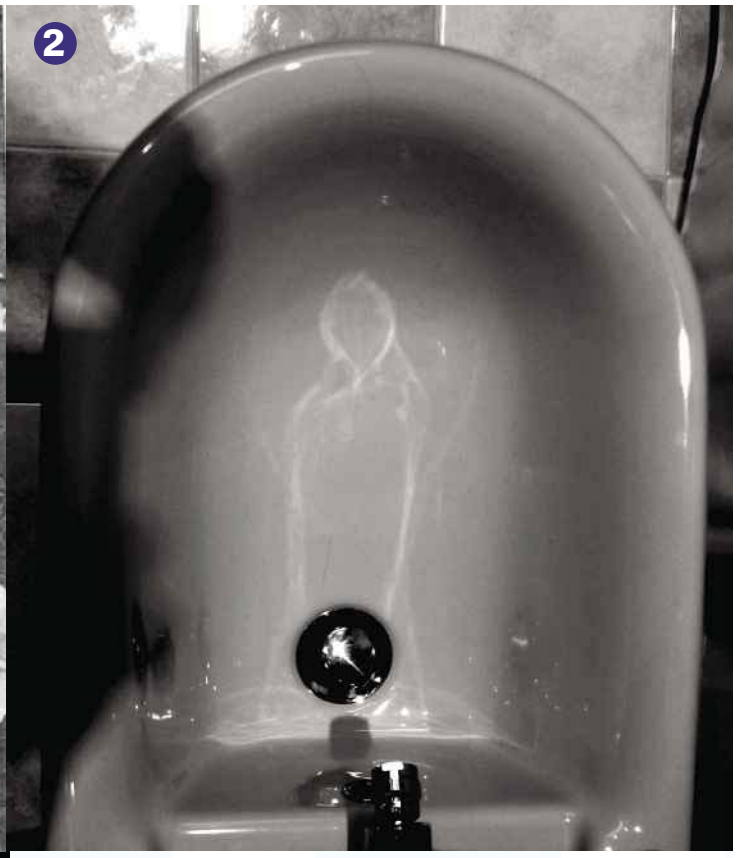
Simulacra corner



BVM SIMULACRA

1 "The modern Belgian 'miracle': the extraordinary fungus-growth in the form of the Virgin at Borgherhout. The fungus-growth here illustrated, which it will be noted suggests in form a statuette of the Virgin, is growing on some rotten planks at Borgherout, a suburb of Antwerp. Crowds have been to see it, believing it a miracle; while, on the other hand, politicians are utilising the event and its result as an argument in favour of some form of obligatory instruction to fight superstition." (*Illustrated London News, 1 Dec 1906.*)

2 "I haven't been a Roman Catholic for many years and didn't visit the Vatican while in Rome recently," wrote Derek Wood when he sent us this photograph. "I certainly give no credence to the idea of saintly visions. However, one sleepless night in my hotel, I saw this. I call it 'The Miraculous Madonna of the Luminance of Bidet'."

3 James Broadbent sent us this "spontaneous meringue Madonna And Child", photographed by Duncan Saunders of Uffington.

4 Rebecca Wood took this picture on a boat approaching Caldey Island, just off the coast of Tenby, Wales, on 23 August 2008. The island is home to monks of the Cistercian Order. "I noticed that the rocks and foliage in the cliffs of the island seem to form an image of the Virgin Mary," she writes. "The cross on the horizon to the left of the image adds to the effect."

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it happened to me...

First-hand accounts from *FT* readers and browsers of www.forteantimes.com

Haunted trunk

I have an old blue trunk which my mother is convinced is haunted. It looks to be early 20th century; my family acquired it a few years ago from the tip with no knowledge of its history. It was shunted around the house, holding various crafting bits and bobs, until I took it to university. I'd returned home for the summer after my first year and was staying with my fiancé for a few days. My parents were going through a rough patch, and when I wasn't in, my mother would sleep in the room where I slept with all my belongings. She recounted that one night she saw large orbs at the window and smaller ones inside the room floating above the trunk. My mother is quite sensitive and when she reports things they're usually of a 'benevolent' or at least neutral nature; however, she distinctly thought this 'thing', which was in or around or connected to my trunk, was bad and she didn't like it. Since then, she's hated it, and has since added that she thought she heard childish voices coming from the trunk that night.

It returned with me to university, where I shared a house with three other people. It dutifully contained various stuff, was quiet, never showed me any orbs, and remained just a comfortably shabby part of the furniture. I'm about as sensitive as a brick, so while I believed her that there was 'something' about the trunk I never expected to experience anything myself. There was only one small incident where I remember the trunk being odd.

Mum had sent me a message asking if I was bringing 'that thing' back for Christmas, and I assured her that I wouldn't. Later on I realised it was the only way to sensibly contain all the little bits I had to bring back. So, head in the trunk, which was in the doorway, I was arranging some items for the Christmas holidays when I heard a faint mumble as if someone were saying something to me from behind. I turned back into the room, to my fiancé, and asked him what he'd said. He told me he hadn't said a thing.

The trunk is now sitting in my room at home. Mum has slept in there once, with the lights on, and heard the childlike voices again. I have none of these bad feelings towards it. In fact, I love the old thing, possibly due to what I think the cause of the phenomena might be.

> My mother thought she heard childish voices coming from the trunk that night

I can think of one explanation, which has to do with some family troubles that the trunk would have 'overheard' me being upset over back in the summer. The troubles are ongoing, and centred around my parents. I think that whatever's in the trunk may have attempted to communicate with – or even scare – my mother, after seeing me so distressed, and has so far not given me any sign in case it alarmed me. As I said, I am not sensitive, but I get a very comfortable feeling off the old trunk which I like to think is more than my own fondness for vintage objects.

I plan on trying to communicate with whatever's haunting my trunk, using handwritten notes placed inside and trying to record any EVP with a Dictaphone. If anyone has some tips, I'd love to hear them!

Bethany Dean
Bishops Caundle, Dorset

Anniversary Call

Feeling the need to commemorate the 10th anniversary of her mother's passing, my daughter suggested a little get-together between her, myself and C and M, two of our closest friends who'd known Val very well. So in late June 2012 we all met up at Westonbirt Arboretum in Gloucester for an informal remembrance ceremony where we planned to find a quiet spot, play the music she'd chosen for her funeral, and each say a few words about her.

On the short journey up from Somerset, my friends and I were discussing how none of us had experienced any fortean events during the 10 years since Val had died. I commented: "I can't say I've had any 'emails from the grave', or anything like that." My friends agreed. Nothing untoward had happened to them in the past decade either. I reflected quietly to myself how Val would have adored Facebook and Twitter and all the other social networking sites we now have – they weren't around when she was alive, and she was a person who loved to communicate.

We met my daughter in the car park and wandered off into the woods, where we found a lovely little glade amongst the trees for our ceremony. (Val and C often used Westonbirt as a place for their 'office' meetings when they worked for the same organisation years ago, so it was one of Val's favourite locations.) We each wore one of Val's lovingly hand-made waistcoats – it was a hobby she was developing as an Internet business before she died. Preparing to play the music tracks on my iPhone via C's mini-amplifier, I switched it to Airplane Mode to prevent it playing any other unwanted sounds, and the others either switched their phones off or put them on silent.

After the first track I haltingly said my little piece, and we began chuckling as we recalled (amongst other things) what a wicked sense of humour Val had in life; another track was played and my daughter then began reciting some poignant words she'd found on the Internet, becoming more tearful as she tried to struggle through it. She hadn't read more than a few lines when she was interrupted by Yoda's distinctive voice saying jauntily:

"Arr! Message from the Dark Side, there is!"

It was C's phone – her Yoda ringtone is set to play when it receives a text. She hurriedly pulled it from her pocket, very embarrassed at being the cause of the interruption at such a delicate point in the proceedings. "But I turned it right down!" she said. And sure enough, she showed us that the volume was indeed set to zero.

We all had a good laugh about it

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and joked that the coincidence of a text arriving just at that moment was pretty amazing. (We'd kind of dismissed the fact that the volume was set to zero.) Val certainly didn't want people to feel overly sad at her passing – her final song choice for the humanist funeral service she arranged not long before she went was Monty Python's "Always Look On The Bright Side Of Life" – and Yoda's quirky voice, piping up just at that moment, lightened our mood and raised our spirits, so Val would have heartily approved of that. My daughter picked up from where she'd left off, reciting with much more confidence, and the rest of our little ceremony passed without further interruptions.

Later, travelling back home, C had a chance to examine her phone more closely: there were no unread texts. Her phone hadn't received any – and the volume was still on zero. So what – or who – managed to set Yoda off, and bypass the volume setting?

We like to think we know.

Perhaps it was the favoured location, along with our collective heightened emotional state – and the waistcoats that she'd handled, and into which she'd poured her own creative life-spirit, stitch by stitch – that combined to provide a psychic bridge strong enough for Val to influence the phone's electrical circuits and achieve the mischievous effect she wanted.

Whatever the explanation, it's an event that'll certainly stick in my mind as an example of a truly fortean moment.

Bob Kingsley
By email

Hair-Tugging Phantom

One night my colleague and I had just finished cashing up for the night and were chatting as we headed to the ladies' locker room. On our way in we passed a mother and daughter who work with us. Comments were exchanged and my friend and I gathered our things to leave. As we left the locker room I was looking ahead through the small rectangular window on the fire door leading into our stockroom. I saw the mother and daughter walking side by side with their backs to us. This was normal; it was the mother's job to turn off the lights at the back of the store.

ETIENNE GILFILLAN

I thought nothing of it as we took another route past the canteen and down the stairs.

I froze at the head of the stairs when I saw the daughter reaching the bottom in front of us on her own. I had just seen her walking through the stockroom with her mother. I asked her who her mother was with and she shrugged her shoulders. When we reached the front of the store, the mother was waiting for us with the store manager and other members of staff. I was feeling a little freaked out by now, so I asked her who she was with when she switched off the lights. No one had been with her. When I told her what I had seen, everyone scoffed, except her. She became quite pale and her eyes widened. Apparently the figure dressed in white with long black hair had been seen before. There had also been accounts of an older woman who touched people's heads and tugged on their hair. The mother had had several run-ins with the apparition, which could be attested to by other members of staff. It was after this experience that I started reading the *Fortean Times*, and I don't feel quite so comfortable working nightshifts anymore.

Kirsty —
Lanarkshire

Seeing Things

The reference to misperceptions being at the root of ufology in Flying Saucery [**FT288:28**] brought to mind my own "UFO sighting", which happened on Christmas Day 2010. I had spent the day with my parents and was driving home at around 10pm, through the suburban streets of Inverness, when I noticed three bright lights in the sky, which seemed to form a perfect equilateral triangle. The lights looked white and seemed to be moving in formation, as if they were on the corners of some sort of craft – but this craft would have been of astonishingly huge proportions, and was apparently silent! Being somewhat sceptical on the subject of UFOs – at least as far as the extraterrestrial hypothesis is concerned – I was sure it couldn't really be a spaceship, but the more I looked at it, the more it looked like one and I even began to 'see' the edges of a triangular shape between the lights.

It was fortunate that there was no other traffic about, as by now I was almost driving off the road, staring at this thing. Then, for a moment, the lights disappeared behind houses and when they reappeared my perspective had shifted and I saw them quite differently. They were no longer in a perfect triangle and they no longer looked white – they had an orange tinge and I could see that they were flickering slightly. They sank lower in the sky, getting more out of formation and looking more and more orange as they did so, and it became clear they were Chinese lanterns, no doubt released as part of someone's Christmas celebrations.

This experience goes to show how misleading our perceptions can be. Even though I couldn't believe that it really was a huge craft, my brain was clearly saying "What are the odds of three lights being in that formation if there's nothing between them? There must be a triangular structure there" – and producing just such a thing for me to 'see'. It was also interesting to note that the lanterns didn't look at all orange when I first saw them, presumably due to some sort of atmospheric effect; until I saw them from a different angle I would have sworn they were white and the possibility of Chinese lanterns didn't even enter my head. If the lights had disappeared behind the house and I had never seen them again, I would no doubt be convinced to this day that I saw a massive black triangular craft heading out over the Moray Firth!

So while I certainly can't say that all UFO reports are due to misperception, I can definitely say that's what caused my own 'sighting' – and that it can be extremely persuasive.

Arwen N Williamson
Culloden, Inverness

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Why Fortean?

Fortean Times is a monthly magazine of news, reviews and research on strange phenomena and experiences, curiosities, prodigies and portents. It was founded by Bob Rickard in 1973 to continue the work of Charles Fort (1874–1932).

Born of Dutch stock in Albany, New York, Fort spent many years researching scientific literature in the New York Public Library and the British Museum Library. He marshalled his evidence and set forth his philosophy in *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932).

He was sceptical of scientific explanations, observing how scientists argued according to their own beliefs rather than the rules of evidence and that inconvenient data were ignored, suppressed, discredited or explained away. He criticised modern science for its reductionism, its attempts to define, divide and separate. Fort's dictum "One measures a circle beginning anywhere" expresses instead his philosophy of Continuity in which everything is in an intermediate and transient state between extremes.

He had ideas of the Universe-as-organism and the transient nature of all apparent phenomena, coined the term 'teleportation', and was perhaps the first to speculate that mysterious lights seen in the sky might be craft from outer space. However, he cut at the very roots of credulity: "I conceive of nothing, in religion, science or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while."

Fort was by no means the first person to collect anomalies and oddities – such collections have abounded from Greece to China since ancient times. **Fortean Times** keeps alive this ancient task of dispassionate weird-watching, exploring the wild frontiers between the known and the unknown.

From the viewpoint of mainstream science, its function is elegantly stated in a line from Enid Welsford's book on the mediæval fool: "The Fool does not lead a revolt against the Law; he lures us into a region of the spirit where... the writ does not run."

Besides being a journal of record, **FT** is also a forum for the discussion of observations and ideas, however absurd or unpopular, and maintains a position of benevolent scepticism towards both the orthodox and unorthodox.

FT toes no party line.

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PHENOMENOMIX

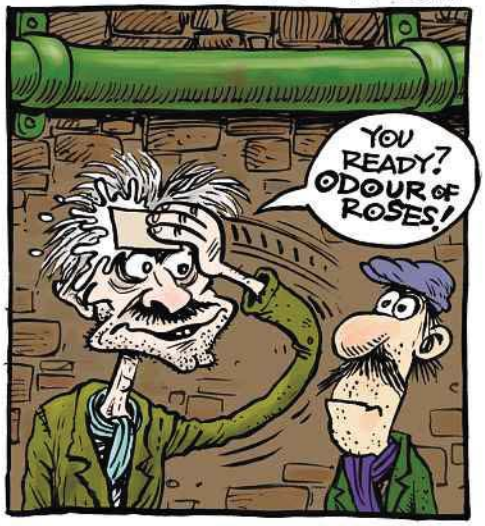
Austin Osman Spare 4

HUNT EMERSON + KEVIN JACKSON

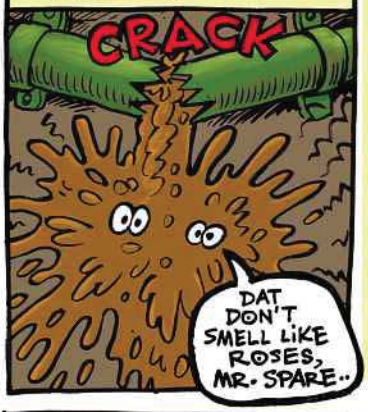
AFTER HIS HOUSE WAS BOMBED OUT, SPARE BECAME HOMELESS FOR A WHILE. HE LIVED IN HOSTELS UNTIL HE SETTLED INTO A DAMP BASEMENT IN A SLUM. HE SLEPT ON NEWSPAPERS, GAVE HIS MEAT RATIONS TO THE DOZENS OF STRAY CATS HE ADOPTED, AND LIVED MAINLY ON MILK...

EVEN HIS MAGIC POWERS SEEMED TO BE GOING WRONG! HE TRIED TO SUMMON THE ODOUR OF ROSES WITH **SIGIL MAGIC**...

(see Part 3, FT 299)



BUT INSTEAD OF ROSES...



BUT IF HIS SPELL-CASTING WAS A BIT OFF, HE STILL HAD A LOT OF STRANGE EXPERIENCES! ONE NIGHT HE STUMBLED ACROSS A PUB WHERE HE HAD A MERRY EVENING, NOTING ONLY THAT THE PEOPLE DRESSED A BIT STRANGELY...

THE FOLLOWING DAY HE WENT BACK THERE, TO DISCOVER THAT THE PUB HAD BURNED DOWN CENTURIES EARLIER!!

ON ANOTHER OCCASION, HE BOARDED A BUS THAT TURNED OUT TO BE FULL OF "WITCHES FROM ANOTHER DIMENSION"!

AUSTIN OSMAN SPARE DIED IN 1956, EMACIATED AND FORGOTTEN SAVE BY HIS LOYAL FRIENDS...

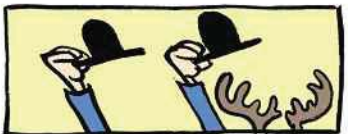
BUT!! AS OCCULTISM CAME BACK INTO FASHION, MORE AND MORE PEOPLE BEGAN TO REDISCOVER HIM. - IN 1969 PSYCHEDELIC GROUP **BULLDOG BREED** RECORDED A SONG ABOUT HIM...

IN THE 1970s, JIMMY PAGE (HIM AGAIN) BEGAN TO COLLECT HIS PAINTINGS- ONCE ALMOST UNSELLABLE, THEY NOW GO FOR THOUSANDS!

OTHER MUSOS AND WEIRDOS STARTED TO PICK UP ON SPARE, INCLUDING **COIL** AND **GENESIS P. ORRIDGE** ...

...AND IN 2011, PHIL BAKER PUBLISHED THE FIRST PROPER AOS BIOGRAPHY! * (TO WHICH KJ AND HE ARE INDEBTED...

WE TIP OUR HATS TO MR. B



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* Strange Attractor Press - £14-99
ISBN: 9781 907 222 115

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CELEBRATING THE CENTENARY OF THE GENTLEMAN OF HORROR

QUINTON WINTER

WEIRD WHITSTABLE

THE STRANGE PHENOMENA OF A SLEEPY SEASIDE TOWN

+

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FORTEAN TIMES 301

ON SALE 25 APRIL

HUGO PIETTE

TALES FROM THE VAULT

EACH MONTH WE SEND *FORTEAN TIMES* FOUNDER BOB RICKARD DOWN INTO THE DARKEST, COBWEB-RIDDEN DEPTHS OF THE VAULTS OF FORTEAN TOWERS IN SEARCH OF STORIES FROM *FT*'S PAST.

MAY 1973

A wonderfully monstrous name-game was played out this month at Weston Park, the Earl of Bradford's 1,500-acre estate at *Weston-under-Lizard*, in Staffordshire (where the A41 crosses ancient Watling Street (now the A5). Just across the A41 from *Lizard Wood* is the ¾ mile (1,200m) -long Norton Mere, where three members of the Dudley Diving Club watched a huge wake, as though "something large was moving below the surface" near the middle of the lake. Within weeks, other diving clubs joined in a search of the lake, approaching from opposite ends. Alas, nothing was found to rival the monster-lochs of Scotland. The only 'event' was the scream of one diver when an eel bit her toe. This area, in the curiously named foothills of Tong, contains a 'Temple of Diana' in nearby Cottage Wood, and a 'Forgotten Well'. **FT2:13-14**

MAY 1983

Both Fort and the American author and co-founder of the Fortean Society Tiffany Thayer delighted in stories of amateurs outdoing professional scientists, especially in astronomy. They would have been amused by the story of how the 70-year-old retired teacher George Alcock spotted Comet IRAS-Akari-Alcock; his fifth comet in 24 years. On the night of the third, he went out on the balcony of his Peterborough home, settled into a deckchair and raised a pair of World War II German binoculars. Within two minutes he logged his first sighting as the comet (which now bears his name) whizzed past our planet, the closest passage in over a century. **FT40:31**

Four different tales of animal compassion surfaced this month. In the US, a farmer broke his back when a tree fell and pinned him down in a small stream. His sheepdog lay down beside him, keeping hypothermia at bay, until rescue came three hours later.

After his boat capsized in Nassau Sound, Florida, a school of porpoises protected Jeff Barry from sharks for nearly 12 hours.

When Caroline Osborne was hacked to death on a towpath in Leicester, a neighbour's dog stood guard over her remains for 11 hours.

The Harrisons of Barnsley buried their Chihuahua Percy in a sack after he was hit by a car. Seven hours later, another family dog dragged in the sack that it had laboriously dug up. To their greater surprise, they found Percy was still alive after his ordeal. **FT40:12-13**

MAY 1993

This month, what was said to be Thailand's worst ever factory fire – at the Kader Industrial company's toy-making plant on the outskirts of Bangkok – claimed the lives of around 188 workers and left more than 500 injured. They were mostly young girls from rural areas. The case inevitably stimulated calls for improving factory safety and working standards throughout Asia, but locals view the matter differently. A local headman told the Thai national daily *Thai Rath* that the factory had been built over an old cemetery without any attempt to appease its discarnate residents. Four workers had previously been well known to villagers who believed them to be possessed by vengeful spirits from the old graveyard. One, apparently, had prophesied that 200 would be killed because developers had failed to build small spirit houses for the restless dead. **FT72:9**

MAY 2003

Always something new – and wondrous – out of Africa; this time a centaur! According to a Nigerian news agency, women in a small town in the northern state of Zamfara were being terrorised by a creature that appeared to be half-human, half-horse. Mornings and evenings it would appear in different parts of the town and chase females. Such was the atmosphere of fear that women's self-inflicted curfew between dusk and dawn had had a drastic effect upon the town's social life and economy. A son of the Emir of Maru was said to be "trying to get to the root" of the terror. **FT173:7**

No less a personage than the president of Bulgaria, Georgi Parvanov, asked his scientists to investigate why a house in the southern village of Truncha had been struck by lightning on nine separate occasions. The Cholakov family had two lightning conductors installed, but still the blasts came, usually between 3:30 and 4:30pm. The frightened family had taken to living in a tent in their garden.

Also this month, Vincenzo Frascello, a member of the Orton Meadows Golf Club in Peterborough, was struck twice, half an hour apart, during his round. First, lightning hit the tip of his umbrella on the fairway of the 14th hole, giving him a shock. Believing that lightning doesn't strike twice, he continued his game, only to be struck again on the 17th. "It was a lot worse the second time," he said. The odds of a double-strike were said to be three million to one. **FT173:20-21**

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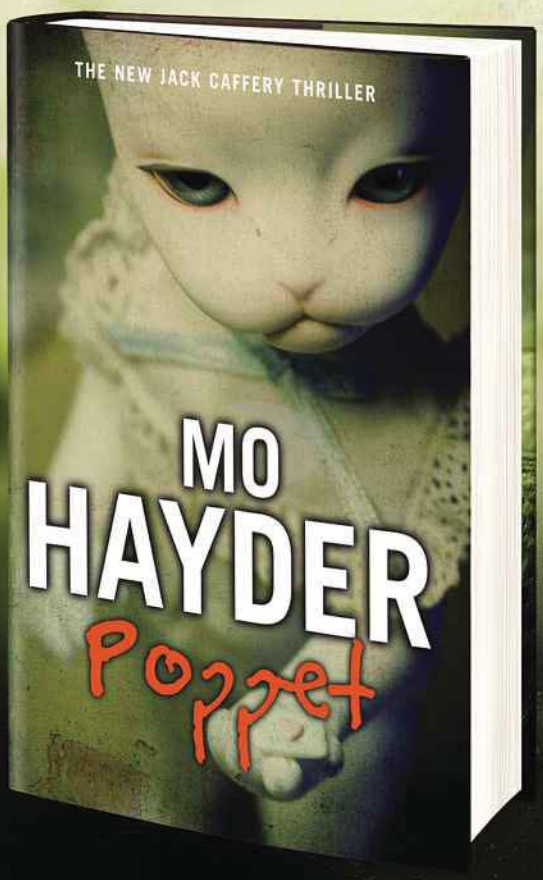
STARE PURE EVIL IN THE EYE



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